Commentary

Volume Sixty-three, Number Four, April 1977

Against the New Economic Order

P.T. Bauer
B.S. Yamey

The American Stake in Israel

Eugene V. Rostow

Why Breira?
Joseph Shattan

Rediscovering Mencken
Joseph Epstein

A Story
David Evanier

OBSERVATIONS

Science and Defense Policy
Jeffrey Marsh

FICTION

In Praise of Chaim Grade
Ruth R. Wisse

THEATER

Class Struggle on Broadway
Jack Richardson

BOOKS IN REVIEW

John Romano
Hyam Maccoby
Stephen Miller
Seth Cropsey
William M. Brinner

PUBLISHED BY
THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE/$2.00

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

True slashes tar in half!

Only 5 MGS. TAR

The one ultra-low tar cigarette with taste.

Regular: 5 mgs. "tar", 0.4 mgs. nicotine, av. per cigarette, FTC Report October 1976.

©Lorillard, U.S.A., 1977

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"THERE IS NOTHING THAT CAN BE SUBSTITUTED FOR SEEING ISRAEL FOR YOURSELF."

—Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel

"I don't believe that there is a better way to express your feelings than to actually go to Israel....There is something special about the Holy Land....Those who go, come back entirely different. They see something that no words can describe."

So spoke Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel, at the beginning of this Solidarity Pilgrimage Year. Yet, what Rabin said is an echo of what every person has felt who has ever visited Israel. You know this.

If you don't you'll learn it at Pesach, when, sitting at the Seder in Israel, every symbol of this festival of freedom will take on richness that almost aches.

You'll know the feeling when you join the crowd and dance through the streets on Purim or Independence Day.

You'll feel it on Shavuot, as the First Fruits are paraded through the kibbutz with so much bursting pride. And at the Western Wall, where the ancient chanting through the night seems to make centuries melt away.

You'll know what "no words can describe" when you walk through the streets of Israel at Sukkot, and find yourself surrounded by beautiful Sukkot booths in every yard and on every balcony.

You'll feel it at Chanukah, at the candle lighting ceremony atop Mount Zion.

But you don't need a celebration to share these experiences. Because every day of Solidarity Year is a celebration of your partnership with Israel.

And once you go and feel these things for the first time, as many times as you return will never be enough.

ISRAEL

Contact your travel agent or
The Israel Government Tourist Office,
488 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commentary

VOLUME 63 NUMBER 4 *APRIL 1977*

Articles	25	Against the New Economic Order *P.T. Bauer and B.S. Yamey*
	32	The American Stake in Israel *Eugene V. Rostow*
	47	Rediscovering Mencken *Joseph Epstein*
Story	53	The Man Who Refused to Watch the Academy Awards *David Evanier*
In the Community	60	Why Breira? *Joseph Shattan*
Observations	67	Science and Defense Policy *Jeffrey Marsh*
Fiction	70	In Praise of Chaim Grade *Ruth R. Wisse*
Theater	74	Class Struggle on Broadway *Jack Richardson*
Letters	6	from *Thomas Sowell, Louis J. Walinsky, Tibor R. Machan, Robert W. Tucker, Harrison E. Salisbury, Samuel Lipman, William N. Tilchin, Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Herbert H. Paper, Susan Aurelia Gitelson, Walter Laqueur, Judith Goldstein, E.L. Dachslager, Leonard F. Villa, W.A. Swanberg, Harry Fleischman, Roger Starr,* and others
Books in Review	76	Selected Poems, 1923-1975, by Robert Penn Warren *John Romano*
	78	Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky, by Robert Wistrich *Hyam Maccoby*
	81	The Fall of Public Man, by Richard Sennett *Stephen Miller*
	84	My Mind on Trial, by Eugen Loebl *Seth Cropsey*
	86	Islam and the Arab World, edited by Bernard Lewis *William M. Brinner*

Editor: Norman Podhoretz

Executive Editor: Neal Kozodoy

Managing Editor: Marion Magid

Associate Editor: Brenda Brown

Contributing Editors: Robert Alter
Milton Himmelfarb
Walter Laqueur

Production Manager: Bruce Lodi

Cover: The Drawing Board, Inc.

COMMENTARY is published monthly by the American Jewish Committee—Single copy is $2.00, $20 a year; 3 years $54; 5 years $80—Add $4.00 per year for all foreign, including Canada and Latin America—Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices.

Copyright © 1977 by the American Jewish Committee; all rights reserved under International and Pan American Copyright Conventions—

Indexed in *Readers' Guide, Book Review Digest, Public Affairs Information Service, Index to Jewish Periodicals, ABC Pol Sci, Historical Abstracts,* and *America: History and Life*—Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed return envelope.

EDITORIAL & BUSINESS OFFICES: 165 E. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Book of life. Free.

What's anybody doing about a vaccine for hepatitis?

Or about new drugs for high blood pressure?

Or about better tools to detect diseases?

Well, at this moment, there are thousands of highly trained people working on these and hundreds of other prescription product research projects.

They're working in laboratories at member companies of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association.

To be sure, the crusade for better medicines and medical devices is, like many creative ventures, a collaboration. Our people work with other scientists in medical schools, clinics and government institutes.

For our part, we spend a billion dollars a year to discover new medicines. And to improve existing medicines.

We'd like you to know more about pharmaceutical research. But rather than try to list ongoing projects—an impossible task, given the space—we've published a report about them.

It's called "A Prognosis for America."

In it we mention, for example, efforts to wipe out schistosomiasis, a disabling disease that afflicts millions in developing nations. We mention prostaglandins, an extraordinary class of substances that may be among the "miracle drugs" of the 1980s.

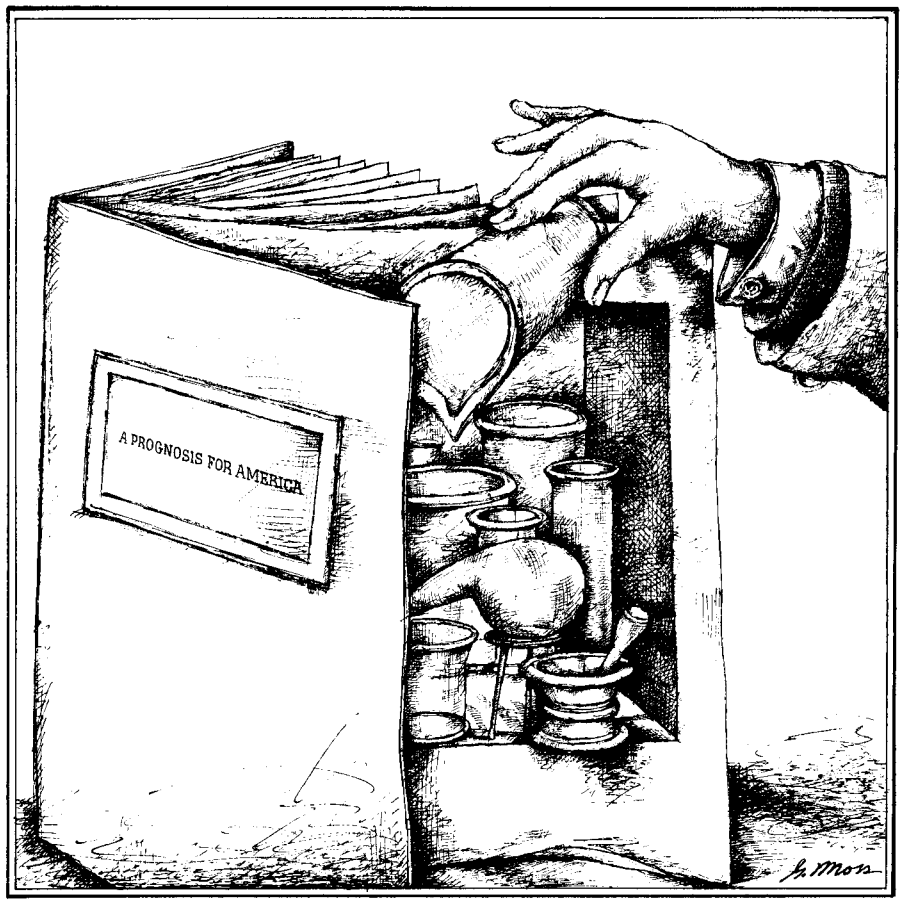
You'll find out about uranium miners taking part in research on a new way to detect clusters of pre-cancerous cells, a test that may have implications in fighting lung cancer and other cancers.

This is a worthwhile document for anyone who's interested in health.

Which should be everyone. Mail the coupon for your copy.

The Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association

If a new medicine can help, we're working on it.



Mail to "Prognosis," c/o The Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association, Dept. CM-704, 1155 Fifteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

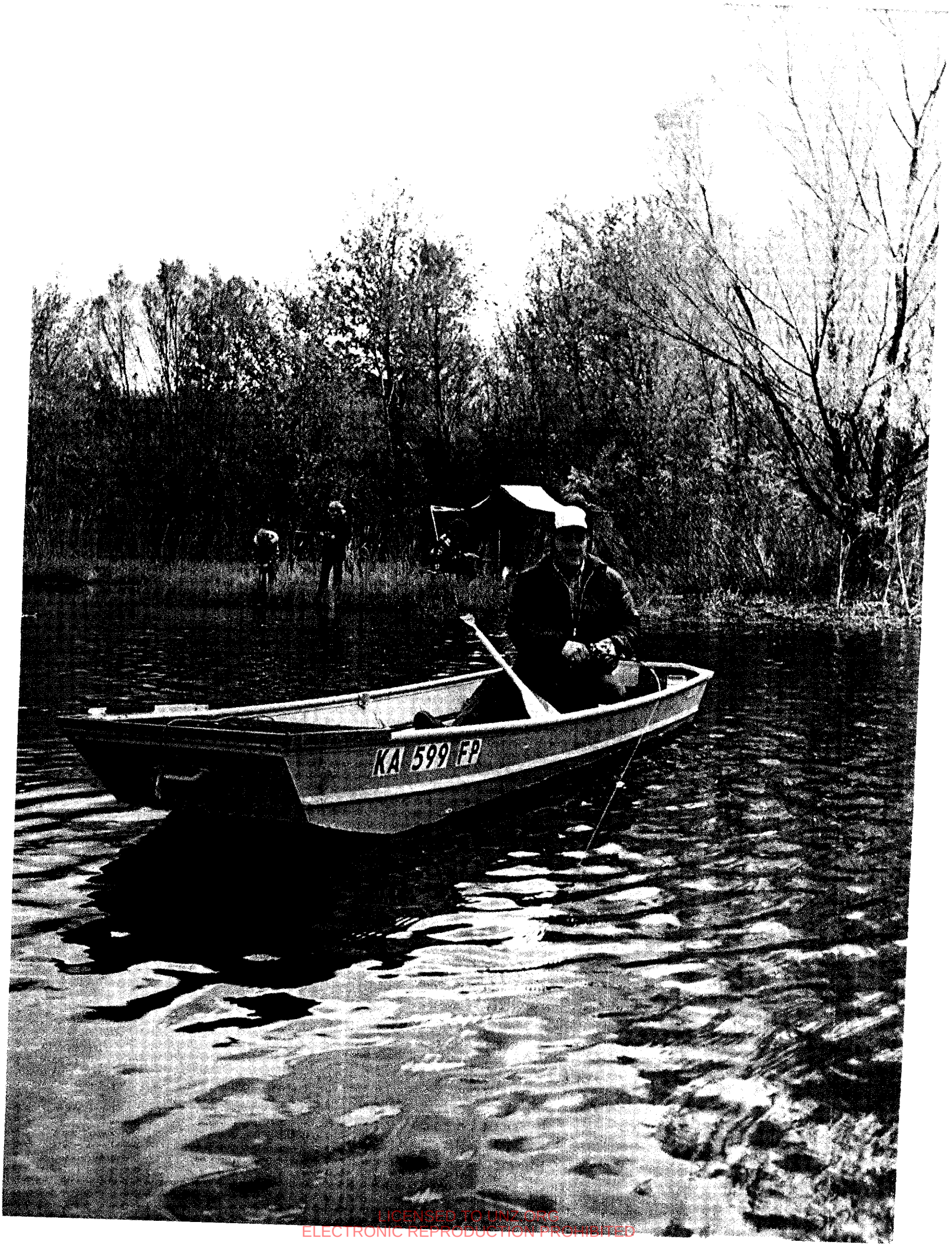
Please send me my free copy of "A Prognosis for America."

name

address

city state zip

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I work for an energy company, but that doesn't mean I hate Mother Nature."

"I'm not going to suggest that an oil well improves the horizon, or that an operating surface mine looks more attractive than the original landscape," says Gulf Project Engineer Ken Cassidy.

"But the fact is that, to produce the energy we need now and will need in the future, we sometimes have to disrupt the environment.

We try harder

"We work hard to keep these disruptions as small as possible, and to get the work over with as quickly as possible. And I think we're doing pretty well.

"I could show you several beautiful places that have yielded a lot of energy from under the earth, and that have been reclaimed and replanted. They look as good as they did before. Sometimes even better.

From coal to bass

"For instance, that spot in the picture. Twenty years ago it was a partial flood plain, so unproductive you couldn't even get firewood out of there. Then fifteen years ago it was producing coal—it was a surface mine. Then it was reclaimed, revegetated. Now it's a favorite campsite for my whole family. And there's no better spot for catching largemouth bass.

A double challenge

"Here, Gulf has met two challenges: producing energy and providing an environment that's good to live in.

"There are bound to be areas in which energy companies and environmentalists may disagree. But there are solutions we can work on together.

"It's a great challenge to recover energy from the earth without permanently disrupting the environment. We are meeting this challenge. We'll continue to meet it one step at a time."

Gulf

Gulf people: meeting the challenge.

"We need the energy—but we need a good environment, too."

Gulf Oil Corporation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Statement of Aims

In sponsoring COMMENTARY, the American Jewish Committee aims to meet the need for a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues. Its pages will be hospitable to diverse points of view and belief, and it hopes to encourage original creative endeavor in the various fields of culture. The opinions and views expressed by COMMENTARY's contributors and editors are their own, and do not necessarily express the Committee's viewpoint or position. The sponsorship of COMMENTARY by the Committee is in line with its general program to enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Jewish concern, to fight bigotry and protect human rights, and to promote Jewish cultural interest and creative achievement in America.

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

Elmer L. Winter, *President*

The Commentary Publication Committee

Edward E. Elson, *Chairman*

Norman Alexander
Donald M. Blinken
Charles D. Breitel
Theodore Ellenoff
Richard C. Ernst
Maurice Glinert
Robert H. Haines
Lewis J. Laventhol
Richard Maass
Bess Myerson
Ned Pines
Frederick P. Rose
David Sher
John Slawson
Harry Steiner
Alan M. Stroock*
Laurence A. Tisch
Ben Touster
Gerard Weinstock

**Honorary Member*

Letters from Readers

Thought Control

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Michael Novak's stand against "intellectual muggers" ["Race and Truth," December 1976] is courageous and perceptive, and all too rare in the intellectual and academic community, which usually ignores the victim's cries because it "doesn't want to get involved."

In matters of race, there is simply no such thing as free discussion. There are obligatory pieties, suppressed questions, and cancerous duplicities—*within* as well as between individuals. Thought controllers have become so much a fact of life as to be not only unopposed but almost unmentioned, despite the variety and eminence of their victims. James Coleman, Daniel P. Moynihan, and Stanley M. Elkins are just the tip of the iceberg. For all the unbridled abuse they have suffered, these scholars are far less victimized than those who have quietly filed away their own research findings when the results might rouse the furies, who have prudently withheld invitations to speakers who might create a campus "security problem," who have stifled the instinct to protest against personnel policies which gall their deepest convictions and sensibilities.

Mr. Novak asks whether a *truthful* discussion of race is impossible, and attempts to vindicate various substantive findings against the smear tactics that have been used to attack them. This is all right in itself, but the case for freedom does not rest on whether this scholar's analysis is better than that scholar's analysis. The more basic question is whether an *open* discussion is possible. If people can be silenced because some cultural *Gauleiters* decide that they are wrong intellectually or dangerous politically, that is more important, and more deadly, to democratic freedoms than any question of the scholarly qualities of their work. The merits or prominence of the victims only highlight the power and the arrogance of the thought controllers. But the real damage is to freedom itself, which is to say, to all of us. We all have a stake in the basic freedoms and basic decencies, without which all our other work means nothing.

If Mr. Novak's stand remains an isolated act of individual heroism, seconded only by quiet murmurs of approval among friends, then we will have allowed the intellectual hoodlums to win by default.

THOMAS SOWELL
Center for Advanced Study
in the Behavioral Sciences
Stanford, California

Oil

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

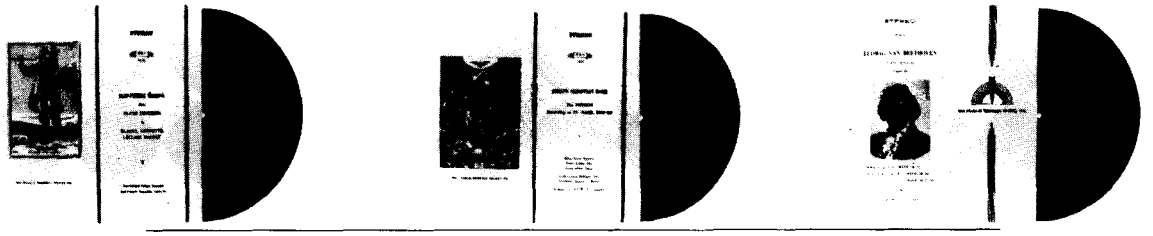
In his . . . excellent analysis, "Oil and American Power—Three Years Later" [January], . . . Robert W. Tucker attributes great weight, rightly, to the role of the intellectual elites who welcomed the OPEC move as a major step toward rectifying the highly disparate distribution of wealth and income between the rich and the poor nations, but he fails to note the fact that most of these same people joined with a great many others in regarding any possible exercise of American power abroad as highly immoral. Much of this same constituency joined with still others who have feared, since Vietnam, that any such attempt might involve us in another shooting war. Mr. Tucker also does not mention the widespread belief that higher oil prices . . . were necessary for our own good. This position was accepted by many who believed that only through much higher prices could we achieve the energy conservation they regarded as vital to our interests. It was also accepted by those who thought higher prices were essential to induce investment in high-cost alternative sources of energy and thus promote energy independence.

Our failure to confront OPEC on the oil issue, according to Mr. Tucker, has led to a visible decline in American power. . . . But I believe it is important to note that this "loss" need not endure any longer than we choose to permit it to. It is not our power that has declined, but rather our will to exercise it. Should our perception of our vital interests change, so would our will. In that event, there would remain little room for doubts about our power. Mr. Tucker affirmed, two years ago ["Oil: The Issue of American Intervention," January 1975], the feasibility of U.S. military intervention in the Middle East to break the oil cartel. I be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Special $1 Offer

Recordings of World's Great Artists from Musical Heritage Society



Any 3 Recordings of Your Choice—only $1 Each

PLUS ALL THESE ADDED BENEFITS:

1. FREE CATALOG
of over 2,000 records and cassettes spanning our entire musical heritage: Medieval, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, Classical, Romantic, Modern!

2. FREE SUBSCRIPTION
to the Society's NEW RELEASE ANNOUNCEMENTS, describing the 12 to 20 *new* recordings issued per month, all made to the highest standards.

3. CHARGE ACCOUNT
This permits you the convenience of charging your purchases—of paying for your recordings *after* you have received and tried them.

AND NO PURCHASE OBLIGATION—EVER!

You'll enjoy these and many other benefits if you accept *Complimentary Membership in* Musical Heritage Society.

World Renowned Composers, World's Greatest Artists Are On The Society's Recordings

You can enjoy the superb artistry of such musical luminaries as **Maurice Andre, Jean-Pierre Rampal, Lily Laskine, Jean Martinon, Pierre Monteux, Alicia De Larrocha, Franco Gulli, Helmuth Rilling, Mare-Claire Alain, Jörg Demus, Nicolas Harnoncourt** and many others. All recording the works of the world's great composers.

And the Society offers you not only the more popular works of the best-known composers, but perhaps more important to many music-lovers (and to schools, colleges and libraries) it also offers a large selection of works *not* available elsewhere.

Some composers, notably Telemann, Pachelbel, Fasch, Gilles and many others have become noteworthy in today's music world due almost solely to the Society's efforts!

144 PAGE CATALOG... SENT TO YOU FREE

The complete catalog of the Society's recordings is thus a treasure-list for musicians and music lovers.

Its offerings include every serious musical form: Operas, Symphonies, Concertos, Cantatas, Chamber Music, Folk Music, Oratorios, Masses, Requiems, Gregorian Chants, etc.

This complete catalog will be sent to you at once when you mail the Complimentary Membership Request Form. You may use your catalog to select your choice of the 3 recordings at the Special Offer price of only $1 each (cassettes $2 each).

And once you receive your Special Offer recordings and listen to their superb quality, you may select at your leisure other recordings as you wish to buy and enjoy them. Always at the Society's low price to members.

HOW THE SOCIETY OPERATES

The Society's recordings are not sold in stores. They are offered directly to members through new release announcements mailed at three week intervals. Records and cassettes are sold at low producer-direct-to-user prices of $3.50 per record or $4.95 per cassette.

When the Society receives your request, it sets up an account in your name, sends you its latest catalog and includes a certificate entitling you to buy up to three records of your choice for $1.00 each plus shipping. (Or you may buy up to three cassettes for $2.00 each.)

The Society will begin sending you new release announcements. There is no purchase obligation and you may cancel your subscription at any time. As a subscriber two outstanding selections will be scheduled for shipment to you from each release. You may accept the scheduled selections by not returning the advice form always provided; you may order only the recordings you want or you may advise us to ship no recordings at all.

A Complimentary membership is yours on request. Why not accept it today—and benefit from our initial Special Offer? Simply mail the handy coupon below. It involves no obligation on your part. It will bring you years of musical pleasure and satisfaction.

Complimentary Membership Request Form

MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY, Dept. CM
Musical Heritage Society Building, Oakhurst, New Jersey 07755

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Society,
Please enter my complimentary membership in the Society.

I am interested in: ( ) **12" Stereo Records**
( ) **Dolbyized Stereo Cassettes**
( ) **Both**

OFFER OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS ONLY.
•
OFFER VALID IN U.S.A. ONLY.

Also please:
- Set up an account in my name.
- Send me your catalog of over 2,000 classical records and cassettes.
- Send me a certificate entitling me to buy three records for only $1.00 each plus shipping (or three cassettes for $2.00 each).
- Enter my subscription to your new release announcements. It is understood that no fees or purchase obligation is involved and that I may cancel at any time. I understand that, as a subscriber, two outstanding selections from each release announcement will be scheduled for shipment to me. I further understand that I may accept these selections by not returning the advice form, order only what I want or decline everything by returning the advice form.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lieve he was right in this conclusion, but I have never understood why he failed to explore, as a first step, the feasibility of economic countermeasures to achieve the same objective. I have no doubt that economic countermeasures available to us would be more than adequate to do the job, and I hope that before too long we shall find the wit, and the will, to employ them.

LOUIS J. WALINSKY
Cohasset, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Robert W. Tucker . . . concerns himself only with power relations and eschews any consideration of what and who may be right. I would like to know, however, what purpose is served in his article by remarks like "What is still unclear, however, are the limits, if any, to a producer state's right to dispose of its resources. The Western powers have not attempted to set meaningful limits to this right." It is possible that Mr. Tucker agrees with the UN General Assembly's 1974 declaration on the establishment of a New International Economic Order that "full permanent sovereignty of every state over its natural resources and all economic activities . . . [is an] . . . inalienable right." If he does agree, we should have been told why. . . . The idea is not self-evident. On its face, since rights are a moral category, and since moral categories apply only to moral agents, the fictional status of states would render it impossible for them to possess rights in any but a purely derivative sense. And the claim seems false on its face anyway because even if it made sense for states to have rights, surely the international order sanctioned by the UN rejects the truth of such claims in . . . Rhodesia, South Africa, etc. There is no tradition in which the position seems to find great support, either theoretically or historically—the quality of a state has always been a condition for respecting its economic and other sovereignty. . . .

Now Mr. Tucker's remark is a very strange one whether he accepts the UN claim or not. If he does, then why worry about "the limits . . . to a state's right to dispose of its resources"? Assuming this right exists, why would it be limited? What considerations (excepting force) would limit it? If it is not limited at all, then why should Mr. Tucker claim that the exercise of this right might be dangerous? . . . In short, *if* the OPEC states do have the right to dispose of their resources, then our responsibility to live under the terms they . . . set is that much greater. What then is the complaint?

But if all this talk of rights is mere nominalism, then why not get down to a careful analysis of just what *should* be done? Why doesn't Mr. Tucker offer morally sensitive analyses of the situation? He criticizes Kissinger for not heeding the oil crisis, but that criticism presupposes that it is the responsibility of such a person to preserve the economic welfare of the country he serves as Secretary of State. Mr. Tucker never demonstrates this duty on Kissinger's part. Mr. Tucker's entire analysis merely assumes that *at all cost* the welfare of the United States and the West should be achieved by political and/or military means. But this normative claim is nowhere demonstrated. Contrary to Mr. Tucker's assumption, such a callous stance regarding international affairs is no better than arguing that crime should be prevented at all cost, even if due process falls by the wayside. The concern with power in Mr. Tucker's several articles is not at all reassuring, even if it is concern with America's power. While the moral elements of the situation may be difficult to trace, . . . a good analyst . . . will face up to the greatest challenge in his field: *how to forge realistic and morally sound policy*. . . . All the fancy footwork and sweeping generalization will not obviate the need for this approach.

TIBOR R. MACHAN
Reason
Santa Barbara, California

ROBERT W. TUCKER writes:

I have no quarrel with Louis J. Walinsky's comments, though I am less sanguine than he is about the effectiveness of economic countermeasures. One would like to know what these measures are, and, if undertaken, whether the principal producers might not avoid their intended effects by turning to West-

The most civilized hotel in New York. Maybe the world.

The Regency Hotel
Park Avenue at 61st Street, New York, N.Y. 10021. (212) 759-4100

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ern Europe and Japan. Besides, the very effectiveness of economic threats holds out—or is thought to hold out—the risk of radicalizing the regimes in Saudi Arabia and Iran, a risk the American government remains unwilling to run.

I am not sure I understand Tibor R. Machan's criticism. He appears to tax me for failure to indicate whether or not I agree with the pertinent claim set forth in the 1974 declaration on the establishment of a New International Economic Order. While casting doubt on the validity of the claimed right of the state to "full permanent sovereignty . . . over its natural resources and all economic activity," he argues that if states are conceded to have such a right then there is no ground for complaint—let alone for retaliatory action—against the exercise of this right, however injurious the exercise might be to the interest of others.

I do not question the legal right of a state to exercise sovereignty over its natural resources. It does not follow, however, that the exercise of this right is without limit. I can only repeat that the critical issue raised is one of limits, an issue that admittedly remains controverted and uncertain. Mr. Machan scarcely admits it at all. He wants a simple and clean solution. Unfortunately, this he cannot have.

Finally, I see no need to "demonstrate" the duty of a statesman to preserve the interest of a state. At the same time, I do not agree that he must preserve these interests at whatever cost to his own state as well as to others. Mr. Machan reads into my analysis arguments that are not there. His admonition that we must forge both a realistic and morally sound policy is unexceptionable, if not very enlightening.

Inventions & Datelines

To the Editor of Commentary:

Reading Nicolas Slonimsky's charming memoir of his Russian grandfather ["My Grandfather Invented the Telegraph," January], whose actual priority in conceiving the principles of the telegraph was thought by the Boston *Traveler* to be a bit of crude Soviet propaganda, recalls to mind a reverse case in which I was involved at the height of Stalin's campaign to demonstrate that the Russians had invented everything first.

While correspondent of the New York *Times* in Moscow, I wrote a

Now voyager, let her carry you to the summer of your sweetest dreams.

DAPHNE
In May, MTS Daphne sails on a literary transatlantic voyage from Miami/New York to European ports with famous authors like Art Buchwald, Joseph Heller, James Jones and Eugene Fodor, among others. Then Daphne enjoys festival time in the British Isles when Green and Pleasant Lands brings you within reach of Chichester, Glyndebourne, Bath, and Stratford-on-Avon, and also to Ireland and Scotland. Call of the Vintage carries wine lovers to Jerez, Madeira, Oporto and Bordeaux. Cruise Aurora to the Land of the Midnight Sun. Visit Land of the Norsemen, and enjoy beautiful music on Echoes of the Fjords.

DANAE
MTS Danae, beautiful sister of the Daphne, will glide through the Mediterranean and Black Seas from May to November. Return to the seedbed of our culture in Springtime of our Past, a journey to Greece during Easter. Journey to our Past carries us back to the Hebrew, Greek and Roman heritage. Canvas and the Brush unrolls European art from Italian masterpieces to Picasso and Matisse. Periplo Musicale, with the I Musici, visits the birthplaces of great composers of the past. Enjoy Hospitable Waves, a cruise on the Black Sea, or Lotus Eaters, a cruise devoted to pleasure and leisure.

THE CARRAS COMPARISON
At Carras our job is making luxury more elegant. Our passengers are usually seasoned travelers. They can compare us with other cruise ships. And when you compare us, we shine.

We carry fewer passengers. That means spacious cabins, each with a bathroom and a bathtub. Our dining room is large enough to accommodate all passengers at one sitting. Our cuisine is the envy of famous restaurants. And our decks, being less crowded, are delightfully strollable.

There's just one thing. We work very hard to find fascinating ports of call. But some of our passengers are so happy on board, it's hard to entice them ever to leave the ship!

MTS Daphne and MTS Danae are registered in Greece, land of Poseidon, god of the sea.

SPECIAL AIR/SEA PROGRAMS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

TALK TO YOUR TRAVEL AGENT OR WRITE TO CARRAS FOR OUR FACT-FILLED BROCHURES.

Carras
carries you away

75 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10019
(212) 757-0761
DEPT. PP-2

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How can I get a new slant on the Middle East Conflict?

Read **Israelis Speak**

Thirteen leading Israelis...Left to Right... meeting in 1976 in Europe...discussing Israel and the Palestinians.

Israelis Speak tells you what they said. Based on extensive transcripts, this is **the** book showing what Israelis themselves now think about ■ the Palestinians and their beliefs ■ the meaning of the Palestinian issue for Israel's future ■ the prospects for Israel-Palestinian peace. A candid book. A window on Israel. Revealing. Timely.

Israelis Speak About Themselves and the Palestinians *edited by Larry L. Fabian and Ze'ev Schiff. 275 pages. paper $5.00; cloth $10.00.*

The West Bank and Gaza Strip —economic showcases...or depressed areas? Neither. Get the accurate picture.

Read **Benefits and Burdens**

Israel had no economic master-plan for the two territories, yet what happened after 1967 was more complex and no less profound than if a master-plan had actually existed. Some upbeat economic trends...but also an unfinished agenda for economic development... radically reoriented ties with Israel and Jordan...and a legacy of controversial economic issues for Middle East peace negotiators whose decisions could set the political future of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Benefits and Burdens: A Report on the West Bank and Gaza Strip Economies Since 1967 *by Brian Van Arkadie with a prologue by Larry L. Fabian. 175 pages. paper $3.75.*

For copies write

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
11 Dupont Circle, Wash. D.C. 20036

story one day mentioning Halley's comet. Some imp inspired me to add the words, "or Ivanov's comet, as it is known in Russia in honor of its Russian discoverer."

Strict as was the Soviet censorship in Stalin's day, the reference to the "Russian discoverer, Ivanov" whizzed through and the dispatch was delivered intact to Forty-third Street in New York City and duly printed, Ivanov and all.

I keep watching succeeding editions of the *Bolshaya Sovyetskaya Entsiklopediya* for a learned article on Ivanov. It hasn't appeared yet. But I expect it will.

HARRISON E. SALISBURY
New York *Times*
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Nicolas Slonimsky included among his grandfather's speculations the "theoretical" difficulty faced by Orthodox Jews in relating to the establishment of a Jewish dateline in the Far East. He might be interested to learn that this problem (as detailed in my book, *Japanese, Nazis, and Jews*) became a very practical one for the hundreds of talmudic scholars and rabbis who came to Kobe, Japan, as refugees during 1940-41, on their way to Shanghai.

Amidst the many problems . . . which faced the refugees in Kobe, one group, primarily the rabbinic and yeshiva element, was concerned with a rather interesting halakhic problem: on which day is the Sabbath or Yom Kippur once you have crossed the international dateline? . . .

The Russian-Jewish communities of Japan and Manchuria followed the ruling of their Chief Rabbi, Aaron M. Kiseleff of Harbin, and observed all Jewish holidays according to the local calendar. Rabbi Kiseleff's views, however, were not considered authoritative by the scholarly students of the yeshivas. . . .

While en route to Kobe, Rabbi Aaron Kotler, a leading rabbinic scholar, anticipated the problem. He cabled to Jerusalem . . . for a ruling. Rabbi Isaac Halevi Herzog, Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land, immediately called an assembly of scholars in September 1941 to clarify the law on this matter. The conclusion reached by this assembly concurred . . . with the ruling of Rabbi Kiseleff; that is, that the local calendar for both the Sabbath and the forthcoming Yom Kippur should be followed. The only dissenting voice was that of Rabbi Avraham-Shaye Karelitz, better known as the "Khazon Ish" . . . who ruled that the refugees should observe the Sunday in Kobe as their Sabbath, eat on the Yom Kippur as celebrated in Kobe (Wednesday), and fast on the following day.

In deference to the great authority of Rabbi Karelitz, yet not desiring to go contrary to the assembly's ruling, the yeshiva students observed the Sabbath for two days. In order to avoid a two-day fast on Yom Kippur, most of the rabbinic groups and yeshiva students left Kobe for Shanghai a few weeks before their deadline. However, the small contingent which remained observed Yom Kippur . . . for two days, though only the stronger ones fasted two complete days. . . .

DAVID KRANZLER
Queensborough Community College
Bayside, New York

Music and Art

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "The Performer's Predicament" [Music, January] Samuel Lipman misses an important point in trying to explain why the professional performing artist today plays almost no contemporary music. The composer rather than the performer has created the problem. There is almost no audience for that music—certainly no audience large enough to support many performers in much style.

Like poetry, serious music produced today has lost its audience. Both arts had enormous followings in the 19th century when they spoke rhythmically and melodically to the soul of the listener. The visual arts of the 20th century have fared better because, I suspect, they have physical substance. They are there to be seen and re-seen. Rarely is music given a second chance if it isn't appreciated when first heard.

All arts are public. To survive they need enthusiastic, not polite, acceptance. Art is creating something new. The public either responds to it or does not. If even the most enlightened public fails to come back to listen or look, artists who want acclaim must speak in ways more moving.

JEROME MARLIN
Norfolk, Virginia

SAMUEL LIPMAN writes:

If Jerome Marlin were to confine

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

himself to stating that contemporary music has no wide public, no one—least of all I—would deny the truth of that observation. But he goes on further, to assign blame. He ascribes responsibility to the composers, and he advises them, if they "want acclaim," to mend their ways. Such counsel would be meaningful if one were dealing with a normal market situation in which satisfaction of consumer desires is both the goal and also the criterion of success. However, music, as high art, is different in that (at least for the Western European romantic tradition of which we are a part) the artist pleases others only as a by-product—often, it is true, one devoutly wished—of pleasing himself. The miracle of it is that so much great art, as supremely with the music of Beethoven, has managed to be both moving for the audience and true to its creator. One can lament that so little contemporary music seems to satisfy these two requirements. One may try to find the reasons for this failure. But to demand that artists write music which will be moving is not only to ascribe to them a kind of choice they do not have, but also to misconstrue the process by which art is made.

Life under Slavery

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Bertram Wyatt-Brown's review of Herbert G. Gutman's *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* [Books in Review, January] was both interesting and timely. Mr. Wyatt-Brown's contention that "sentimentality" has led to insupportable conclusions in several of the recent major studies of slave life in the Old South appears to be accurate. (It must be noted, however, that the reviewer is somewhat unfair in so closely linking Eugene D. Genovese's highly informative *Roll, Jordan, Roll* with Robert Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman's *Time on the Cross*, a work whose . . . outrageous distortions are well-known to most serious students of American slavery.)

Recent works on slavery have provided us with some very important new evidence . . . which has convincingly shown that the majority of slaves had social and cultural experiences which made their lives seem worth living, with only a minority succumbing to total despair. . . .

But to agree with some of the earlier conclusions of Kenneth Stampp is certainly not to be a "racist." . . . The emotional havoc which the system of slavery in the antebellum South wreaked on its victims cannot be denied—nor should it be. It is no disapprobation of the slaves to claim that most were at least somewhat damaged psychologically by a social and legal arrangement which was so immoral, exploitative, and brutal. They deserve, rather, to be commended for having endured it as well as they did.

WILLIAM N. TILCHIN
Birmingham, Michigan

BERTRAM WYATT-BROWN writes:

William M. Tilchin's letter provides an opportunity to revise the overly bleak criticism of Eugene D. Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, a sophisticated and brilliantly structured interpretation of the slave experience. Moreover, though battle-weary at times, Genovese is not afraid to voice unpopular opinions; he does not misuse the charge of "racism" to lambaste fellow scholars; he does not raise spurious contentions to promote sales. My remarks might have given the opposite impression. Yet, along with Professors Gutman, Fogel, and Engerman, he has encouraged some of the unfortunate tendencies mentioned in the review: overwriting, romanticism, presentism, and an adversary style of historical argument.

"Semitic"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Edward Grossman's article on Authur Koestler's *The Thirteenth Tribe* ["Koestler's Jewish Problem," December 1976], together with the review in the *New York Review of Books*, is sufficient to deal a most deserving death-blow to this travesty of historical scholarship. But, of course, readers of Koestler's book will not read these reviews and the publisher will continue to tout the contribution by Koestler as if it were worth serious attention.

There is one aspect of this whole subject, however, that is especially distressing so many years after the pseudo-racial lunacies of the Nazi period. That is the continued misuse of the term "Semitic" even by well-meaning and otherwise well-informed persons such as Mr. Grossman. When will we stop using the term "Semitic" to refer to race or racial type? The term only refers to a family of languages, often

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PIECES SHOWN ACTUAL SIZE
Twelve Tribes of Israel
STERLING SILVER WITH CHAIN $15
14 KARAT GOLD $75
Mezuzah
STERLING SILVER WITH CHAIN $13
14 KARAT GOLD $75
18 INCH 14 KARAT GOLD CHAIN $20
ZALMAN DESIGNERS
DEPT. C., P.O. BOX 26741
ELKINS PARK, PA. 19117
PLEASE ADD 1.50 FOR INS. & POSTAGE.
PA. RESIDENTS ADD SALES TAX.

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK IN 90 DAYS

Wanted: book manuscripts on all subjects. Expert editing, design, manufacture and marketing—all under one roof. Completed books in 90 days. Low break-even. Two FREE books and literature give details, costs, success stories. Write or phone Dept. 371

EXPOSITION PRESS, INC.
900 So. Oyster Bay Rd., Hicksville, N.Y. 11801
(516) 822-5700 (212) 895-0081

book publishing

Manuscripts invited for prompt editorial review and terms of publication. All categories invited including scholarly works. Professional editing, design and production plus expert promotion and distribution since 1920. Send manuscript or inquiry, or call (215) 563-3553. Ask for free *Author's Guide* B-35.

DORRANCE & COMPANY
1617 J.F.K. Blvd., Phila., Pa. 19103

also spoken of as "genetically-related" languages in the *metaphor* that was borrowed from biology by linguistics in the 19th century. The fact of languages being related to one another implies a particular hypothesis of common linguistic origin that has no bearing whatsoever on the biological characteristics of the speakers of those languages. Thus, the Semitic languages include Akkadian, Ugaritic, Hebrew, Phoenician, Aramaic, Arabic, Amharic, and some others. These have been spoken and continue to be spoken by persons of a variety of racial types, faiths, and cultures. There is no such entity as a Semitic nose, a Semitic mind, a Semitic religion, and the like. Anyone who uses such terms as shorthand for something else, or who believes that such things exist, has been captured by a myth and by sloppy thinking. It is high time that the practice come to an end.

HERBERT H. PAPER
Department of Linguistics
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

The Third World

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Walter Laqueur . . . ["Third World Fantasies," February] has charged that the Third World is led by "demagogues with no genuine interest in economic and social improvements, for whom the nonaligned conferences, UNCTAD, the Paris 'North-South-Dialogue,' and the Group of 77 and other such bodies are merely a platform for their own destructive political ends."

In reality, since there are heads of state everywhere who are primarily concerned with their own self-enhancement politically and economically, it is unjust to single out the leaders of developing countries on this score. It is also unfair to condemn them en masse. . . .

In considering some particular cases mentioned by Mr. Laqueur, one should realize that Mozambique may believe in self-reliance, but it lacks the natural resources and infrastructure to build the society it wishes. If one desires to cite leadership struggles among nationalist movements, however, it would be more appropriate to choose Angola or Rhodesia. Mozambique has been able to contain most of the usual jockeying for position among political leaders (cf. the current struggle within Israel's Labor party) within its single movement, Frelimo, which was established in 1962 in order to unite disparate groups.

This brings us to the contrary charge against one-party states. President Julius K. Nyerere of Tanzania, for example, was elected fairly to the presidency of the nationalist movement in 1953 and attained national leadership even before independence in the 1958 and 1959 elections. As long as he has held office, he has not confronted any really serious rivals. . . . Since Nyerere's party, Tanu, is accepted throughout mainland Tanzania, Nyerere instituted a system of competition for representatives within the party itself. This model has been followed subsequently by other African countries. Of course, the question remains as to how much actual influence parliaments can exert even where they do exist. The growth rate in Tanzania is low and should be higher through both internal and external efforts, but Tanzania has evoked admiration because of the genuine attempt to spread the benefits of development throughout the country and not to confine them to a small elite in the modern sector.

Since most of the Third World countries are relatively small and weak, it is not surprising that they have tried to combine their forces through the nonaligned movement and other groupings. It is unfortunate that the currying of favor with the Arabs has led many of them to join in an unfair condemnation of Israel. Nonetheless, what advocate of democracy would deny them the right to try to unite to have greater leverage in international politics?

Finally, it is undoubtedly unfortunate that much of the press in Third World countries is controlled by the governments, yet the shrinking number of newspapers is not necessarily in itself a sign of declining democracy. There are now more dailies published in Lagos than in New York!

Let us view the Third World in proper perspective and be more willing to make careful distinctions among the various developing countries.

SUSAN AURELIA GITELSON
New York City

WALTER LAQUEUR writes:

I accept Susan Aurelia Gitelson's point in regard to the number of dailies in Lagos as com-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pared with New York, and concede that this is bad for New York.

But I did not condemn the governments of Third World countries en masse; the remarks she quotes referred to the most vociferous spokesmen of the group, as I made quite clear. The history of Frelimo in the 1960's (and even later) was one of bloody internal clashes and purges; a comparison with the struggle for power in Mapai seems a little farfetched, to put it mildly.

Born Again

To the Editor of Commentary:

Forrest McDonald's condescending notions and prejudices demand refutation ["A Mirror for Presidents," December 1976]. He may be competent to help his readers "bone up" on the administrations of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. I do not question Mr. McDonald's facts and conclusions about these Presidents, although I find his haughty tone offensive. But I strongly object to his insinuations about Jimmy Carter's understanding of history.

"As a born-again Baptist," Mr. McDonald writes, "the President-elect may believe that the Bible contains all the history he needs to know, and perhaps he is right." Incredible ideas! Mr. McDonald presents neither evidence nor proof for such outrageous assumptions. Everyone knows that Carter is a born-again Baptist. But Mr. McDonald must be the only one who believes that Carter confines his knowledge of history to the Bible or who could suggest that in this he might be "right."

Judith Goldstein

New York City

Court Costs

To the Editor of Commentary:

Clearly, Donald L. Horowitz wrote his important article, "Are the Courts Going Too Far?" [January], as well as his book, to stimulate the enactment of legislative remedies for an increasingly serious encroachment of the courts into policy-making areas that belong to our elected representatives. Yet he will not achieve any such action by just pointing to social-policy decisions which many legislators hate to tackle overtly. What might prove more effective is an estimate . . . of the substantial monetary costs which many unorthodox court decisions are imposing on the public, and which were never intended by those who wrote the laws. The list of hidden taxes imposed upon the public by current court decisions might then grow long enough to build up public pressure, which alone will stimulate the state legislatures and Congress into action. After all, the political stability of our republic rests on the fact that our electorate votes its pocketbook far more ardently than its social ideologies.

Arnold Bondi

Houston, Texas

Saint Paul

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . I am puzzled over Hyam Maccoby's statement in his review of Michael Grant's *Saint Paul* [Books in Review, December 1976] that "There is no solid evidence that Paul even knew the Hebrew

See Europe on your way to Tel Aviv.

Israel is a long way off so it makes sense to make a stop on your way to Tel Aviv. And there's no better place to stop than in the heart of Europe—Frankfurt, Germany. You can rest, relax, shop, do a little business or rent a car and do some sightseeing in Europe's most beautiful scenery: the Rhine Valley, the Black Forest, the majestic Alps.

Lufthansa's fast comfortable jets leave from New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles and Anchorage. If you prefer kosher meals, please order them when you make your reservation. Call your travel agent or Lufthansa German Airlines.

Lufthansa German Airlines

680 Fifth Avenue, 52 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10019
Telephone: (212) 357-8400

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LIMITED EDITION ETCHING, SIGNED AND NUMBERED BY

Jules Maidoff

King David

"Maidoff's work reveals the human condition in a highly personal way, yet it is universal in its impact because of his sensitive and poetic approach."
—Oriole Farb, Director, Riverside Museum, New York

This graphic adventure blends the richly textured and fascinating interplay of an ancient subject in a modern treatment. In soft tones of sepia, it measures 16" x 17¾" on an ivory-colored sheet 21" x 29½". This edition was limited to 200.

Jules Maidoff's rare gifts have not gone unnoticed. He is represented in museums and private collections both in this country and in Europe, and his many exhibitions have been warmly and enthusiastically received. (His work in galleries starts at $75.00.)

$60.00 including special packaging, postage, and insurance.

Commentary Art Treasures
165 East 56 Street, N.Y., N.Y. 10022

I have enclosed my check for $_____ to cover the cost of *King David* @ $60.00 apiece. This includes postage and insurance. If I am not completely satisfied, I may return this work in good condition, insured, within ten days, and you will send me a prompt refund.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Bible, since his quotations are all from the Greek translation, the Septuagint." To the contrary, many commentators have produced "solid evidence" that Paul more often than not *did* use the Hebrew text rather than the Septuagint (which, perhaps, was not even completed in Paul's lifetime). J. C. O'Neill, for example, in his commentary on the text of Romans (*Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 1975), points to Romans 9:32-33 as "another clear example of Paul's use of the Hebrew original."

The really troublesome point about Paul (his use of texts notwithstanding) is not whether he thought of himself as a Christian or as a Jew. Indeed, Paul's principal problem was how to reconcile both beliefs without destroying either. The problem, needless to say, is still very much with us. Ironically (in light of Paul's teachings) the Christian Church, high and low, is beginning to recognize that in order to be truly Christian, it must first discover, or rediscover, its Jewishness; it is this recognition, I suspect, that is at the bottom of the present state (satisfactory or not) of Pauline studies.

E. L. Dachslager

Houston, Texas

To the Editor of Commentary:

Hyam Maccoby ends his analysis by lamenting the "present unsatisfactory state of Pauline studies." What a satisfactory state would be, I am not sure; but I am sure that definitions of a satisfactory state of Pauline studies would differ, as men differ about the Apostle Paul. This dissatisfaction is inbred among scholars whenever the New Testament is approached only as literature or history. . . . The root of the difficulty can be traced to one quotation from Mr. Maccoby's review: ". . . Profiat Duran began to study the New Testament instead of accepting at face value the Christian Church's account of what Jesus stood for." How does one do this, when the New Testament is the collection of confessional documents of that Church—including the letters of Paul—written for specific purposes? At such a point of departure from the Church, the situation is ripe for every manner of opinion: from Passover plots, to Paul the charlatan, Paul the villain, Paul of a thousand faces. . . .

The Epistles of Paul, because they are confessional documents of the Church, should not be separated from the body that confessed them, and which decided, by its authority, which documents were authentic expressions of its living tradition, and which were not—hence the word canonical. . . .

Apart from this, Mr. Maccoby does Paul certain injustices. He faults Paul for his Greek quotations, for example from Hosea 13:14, and questions whether Paul knew any Hebrew texts. There was a similar criticism of literalism in Paul's use of Deuteronomy 21:23. Yet the talmudic rabbis often differ about the meaning of texts, and these differences become schools of opinion. Is it so startling that Paul chooses an interpretation of the text which is in harmony with his belief in Jesus? . . . This does not mean he was necessarily unfamiliar with the Hebrew, or with differing interpretations, or that he was less a Jew, but only that he made his exegesis in the light of Jesus.

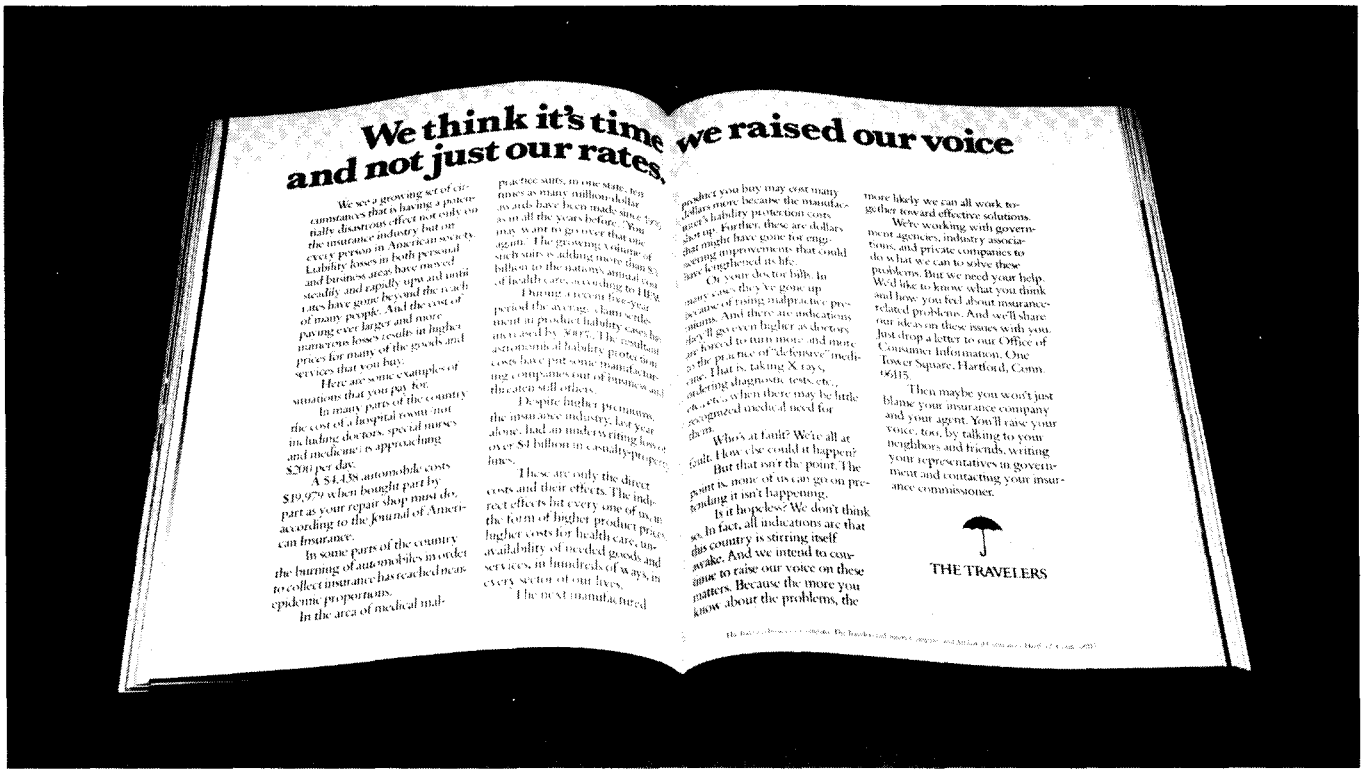
Incidentally, the New American Bible rendition of Hosea 13:14, which is translated from the original languages, does not differ from Paul's rendition. As to the question of his knowledge of Hebrew texts, Paul's thought patterns follow Jewish tradition; for example, the body-soul-spirit relation is not Greek but Hebrew. . . .

Mr. Maccoby, in criticism of Michael Grant's book, reproaches him with being too respectful to Paul: ". . . [H]e suppresses the evidence of the anti-Pauline literature . . . [for example] the Ebionite denunciations. . . . They reveal a very different Paul: one who was consumed by ambition and envy, and who constructed a post-crucifixion divine Jesus as a rival to the historical Jesus, whom he never knew, because this was the only way to assert his own authority against the apostles James and Peter, who were Jesus's lifetime companions."

Why include this? The Ebionites were Jews who acknowledged Jesus as prophet or Messiah, but not as Son of God (see Jean Danielou's *Theology of Jewish Christianity*, p. 7). Of course the Ebionites are going to be anti-Paul, but they are going to be anti-Peter and anti-James, too. . . .

Lastly, Paul does not condemn all non-Christians to hell as Mr. Maccoby asserts. See, for example, Romans 11 regarding the Jewish people. In the final analysis, the reason Paul causes so much division, if you will, is that the fundamental point of separation remains con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



This ad put to rest the theory that people don't want to get involved.

Six months ago, we decided to take our case to the people. We felt the more we all know about what it is that's driving insurance costs up, the better equipped we'd be in turning things around.

What we said apparently hit home.

To date, several hundred people have taken the time to write to us and share their concern about things like price inflation, auto repair costs, and the growing number of medical malpractice suits and product liability claims.

If you'd like to get involved yourself, we can provide you with a booklet that examines, in language all of us can understand, the causes of rising insurance costs, as well as some of the possible remedies available to us.

For a free copy, while they last, just write our Office of Consumer Information, One Tower Square, Hartford, Conn. 06115. Or dial, toll-free, 800-243-0191. In Connecticut, call collect, 277-6565.

Then, maybe instead of just blaming your insurance company, or your agent, you'll join us in working toward some realistic solutions.

Because, as an insurance company, we don't like the high cost of insurance any more than you do.

But we're not going to be able to change things without your help.

THE TRAVELERS

The Travelers Insurance Company, The Travelers Indemnity Company, and Affiliated Companies, Hartford, Conn. 06115.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stant: between those who with Paul and the Church hold Jesus to be the Incarnate Word of God and His Anointed and those who do not. Such a division will not be obscured in any discussion about Jesus or Paul, however scholarly.

LEONARD F. VILLA
Brooklyn, New York

HYAM MACCOBY writes:

E. L. Dachslager says, ". . . many commentators have produced 'solid evidence' that Paul, more often than not, *did* use the Hebrew text rather than the Septuagint." Let us examine, then, Mr. Dachslager's example, from J. C. O'Neill's commentary on Romans. (Readers should note that in cases where the Septuagint and the Hebrew text do not differ, no conclusion can be drawn; only where they differ significantly, can any indication appear of whether Paul was following the Hebrew text or the Septuagint translation into Greek.) In the case under consideration (Romans 9:32-33), Paul appears to be quoting from memory, as he runs together Isaiah 8:14 and Isaiah 28:16. In the second part of this collage, there is a clear instance of quotation from the Septuagint. The Hebrew says, ". . . he who has faith will not make haste," while the Septuagint says, ". . . he who has faith will not be put to shame." Paul follows the Greek of the Septuagint. Yet O'Neill says, "This is another clear example of Paul's use of the Hebrew original." In saying this, O'Neill is ignoring the second part of Paul's quotation and relying on the first part, where he claims that ". . . the Septuagint is strikingly different" and that Paul follows the Hebrew. But, in fact, the Septuagint is here a close paraphrase of the Hebrew, and Paul's very slight deviation from the Septuagint is quite understandable in a quotation from memory. So O'Neill's "clear example" is most unconvincing. Moreover, elsewhere in the same chapter, Paul quotes several times quite unmistakably from the Septuagint, for which O'Neill gives the explanation, "A scribe has added the Septuagint version"!

Earlier Christian commentators admitted quite openly that Paul used only the Septuagint, but recent commentators such as O'Neill, finding this hard to reconcile with the "Jewish Paul," have produced mountains of *pilpul* to argue that he used only the Hebrew text. I stand by my assertion that, while there are dozens of examples of Paul quoting from the Septuagint, there is no solid evidence that he ever quoted from the Hebrew text.

While on this subject, let me deal with Leonard F. Villa's point that the New American Bible, "which is translated from the original languages," follows the Septuagint, not the Hebrew, in Hosea 13:14, just as Paul does. Such a modern decision may well be justified, since the Septuagint does sometimes have an earlier, more authentic reading than the Hebrew Masoretic text. But that is not the point at issue here. The Masoretic text was substantially the Hebrew text in use among the Jews in Paul's time (as the Qumran discoveries have proved). If Paul shows no acquaintance with it, this is relevant to the question of whether he was trained as a Pharisee.

Mr. Villa argues that the Gospels are themselves Church documents, so cannot be opposed to Church teachings. I agree that the Gospels are Church documents, but ones which have acquired only a generation or two of Church accretions. The original teaching of Jesus is much more discernible in the Gospels than in medieval formulations which have acquired many centuries of progressive distortion. From the Synoptic Gospels, for example, it is clear that Jesus never claimed to be God; on the contrary, Luke 18:19 shows that such a claim would have been incomprehensible to him.

On Deuteronomy 21:23, Mr. Villa argues that Paul was entitled to his interpretation within the limits of rabbinical disagreement. But the whole point is that the interpretation in question (that God puts a curse on innocent people unfortunate enough to be hanged or crucified) is not a legitimate rabbinical view, because no rabbi would ever have ascribed such stupidity or injustice to God. On the contrary, the rabbinical view is that a hanged man arouses the anger of God against those who, by leaving the body to hang, insult God, since they treat "the image of God" with contempt (the translation endorsed by modern versions, such as the New English Bible).

On the Ebionites, Mr. Villa says that they were opposed to Peter and James, as well as to Paul. Mr. Villa is evidently unfamiliar with the line of thought, developed from F.C. Baur to S.G.F. Brandon, which regards Peter and James as strongly opposed to Paul, and sees Acts as a cover-up of the fundamental rift between Paul and the Jerusalem Church. This line of thought is much strengthened by the abundant evidence that the Ebionites, who opposed Paul, did *not* oppose Peter or James.

Mr. Villa denies that Paul condemns all non-Christians to hell; the Jewish people will be saved. But this applies only to the Jews of the Last Days who become converted to Christianity, not to those throughout the years who die in their unbelief.

Mr. Villa concludes that the fundamental distinction is between those who deify Jesus and those who do not. The question is, however, did Jesus deify himself? Or was this the work of Paul, acting against the beliefs and teachings of Jesus?

Norman Thomas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his review of my book, *Norman Thomas: The Last Idealist* [Books in Review, February], Roger Starr says: "Instead of excerpts from Thomas's speeches, we are given laudatory letters received by Thomas from those who heard him give them. Instead of selections from Thomas's books, we are given a statement originating with Thomas's son to the effect that his father's books were written too hastily."

Astonished, having been chided with more reason by other reviewers for quoting too damned much from Thomas, I have gone over the book and report the following:

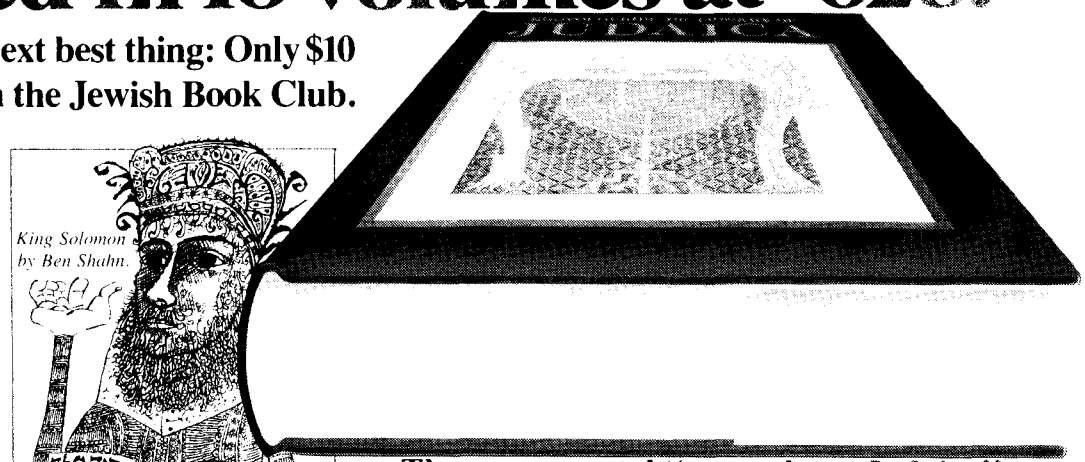
There are thirty-seven direct or indirect quotations from ten of his books, eight of which were composed of his speeches tied together into expository narrative: *America's Way Out, The Choices Before Us, The Test of Freedom, Keep America Out of War, Prerequisites for Peace, A Socialist's Faith, Socialism Reexamined,* and *The Choices.*

There are direct quotations from seventeen speeches. There are quotations from two of his pamphlets. There are quotations from fourteen publications in which he gave his political views, in some of them repeatedly: the *Nation,* the *Christian Century,* the *World Tomorrow,* the *New Leader,* the *North American Review,* the *American Magazine,* the *Call, Harper's, Annals of the American Academy,* the *Princeton*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For people who really deserve the huge Encyclopaedia Judaica published in 16 volumes at $625.

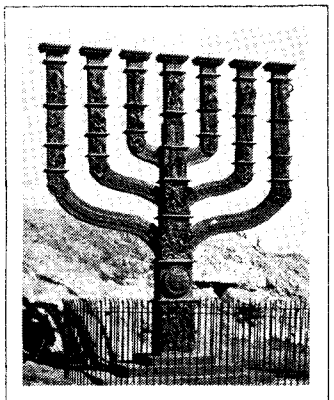
Here's the next best thing: Only $10 with membership in the Jewish Book Club.



The editors of the 16-volume *Judaica* have completed the monumental task of distilling their knowledge of the Jewish heritage into one over-size volume of 720 pages, 15,000 entries, and three-quarters of a million words. For the family with young people of school or college age, this "one-volume Judaica" may well be the *best* thing. It can probably tell you (and your children) more about being Jewish than any other single volume in the English language.

- **Festivals and fasts of the Jewish year (page 189).**
- **Tables to help you make sense of the Jewish calendar (page 112).**
- **Is caviar kosher? See page 158.**
- **A handy chronology of the 300 most significant events in Jewish history (pp. 262-265).**

For those who want to brush up, for those who never really knew but always wanted to, for those who know but can't put it into words for their children, here is what it means to be a Jew. You can look up any aspect of the Jewish heritage that you have ever wondered about, worried about, or suddenly needed to know more about. *The words and music of Kol Nidre? See page 350.* This home library of Jewish knowledge will serve you for a lifetime:



Menorah by Benno Elkan.

1 As a guide to Jewish history, customs, traditions, culture, and folklore as handed down from generation to generation across the centuries.

2 As a biographical dictionary of the great Jewish personalities from Genesis to the present.

3 As a museum of Jewish art, spreading before your eyes in 2,000 illustrations the very image of the Jewish past.

4 **As a remarkably clear exposition of Jewish ritual and belief.**

The order of the Passover seder (page 472). Two ways to don phylacteries (diagram, page 589).

King Solomon by Ben Shahn.

FOR PEOPLE WHO NEED HELP WITH THEIR HEBREW (OR HAVE TO START FROM SCRATCH): How to read the Hebrew alphabet. *For your trip to Israel:* A basic Hebrew vocabulary of 1,000 words (page 651).

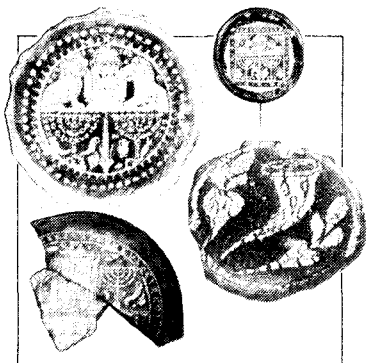
Some arguments you can settle and bets you can win:

- 65 Jewish winners of the Nobel Prize (page 455) and 223 Jews who have won Olympic medals (page 462).
- The Jewish star has sometimes been Christian (page 390).
- Judaism still has priests (page 489).

A general in the Chinese Army who is known to history as "Two Gun Cohen" (page 127). *People you may not think of as Jewish:* Houdini (page 272). Lorne Greene (page 226). Erich von Stroheim (page 575). Victor Borge (page 99).

For people who could use a little help in explaining the difference between the Talmud, Midrash, Mishnah, and Gemara: All the books of the "people of the Book" and what they contain.

THE ART OF BEING JEWISH IN PLACES WHERE MOST PEOPLE AREN'T. A gallery of Jewish art, architecture, and craftsmanship through the ages (much in full color).



Jewish gold glass from Rome 3rd-4th century.

The monumental "one-volume Judaica"

• Compiled and printed in Israel by the publisher of *Encyclopaedia Judaica* • Edited by Geoffrey Wigoder, Editor-in-Chief of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* • Complete in one volume of 720 pages, 11¼" high, 8¾" wide. Weight 5½ lbs. • Illustrated with 2,000 treasures of the Jewish past from the great museums, libraries, galleries, archaeological sites, and private collections. • Published at $29.95.

SOME BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE JEWISH BOOK CLUB

1. Savings up to 50%: On Jewish-interest reference, fiction, history, biography, archaeology, cooking, travel, religion, art, children's books, records, limited-edition etchings, unique deluxe gift editions.
2. Quality editions: All books are identical to the publishers' editions in content, format, size, and quality.
3. Free Magazine: The *Jewish Book News* provides lively reviews of books, art, and recordings of Jewish interest.
4. A complete cultural service for the Jewish family: You'll be able to keep abreast of the best and most important books of Jewish interest — many not available to the general public or stocked by local stores.
5. Your minimum obligation: As few as four selections the first year.
6. A convenience and time-saver: Home shopping & home delivery.

HOW THE JEWISH BOOK CLUB WORKS:

After your membership is accepted, you will begin receiving the *Jewish Book News*, a free publication sent to you thirteen times a year (about every four weeks). All selections and alternates will be described in advance in the magazine.
If you want the main selection featured in the magazine, do nothing and it will be sent to you automatically. If you want an alternate or no book at all, simply indicate your choice on the order form always enclosed with the *News* and return it to us so that we receive it by the date specified. This date is designed to allow you at least 10 days to decide whether you want the selection.
Membership guarantee: If your *News* is delayed in the mail and therefore you receive the main selection without having had ten days to notify us, you may return that selection at our expense.

THE JEWISH BOOK CLUB 165 East 56th Street New York, N.Y. 10022

☐ Please send the ENCYCLOPEDIC DICTIONARY OF JUDAICA (regularly $29.95) at the special new member price of $10.00 and enroll me in the Jewish Book Club. I agree to accept as few as 4 selections or alternates during the next 12 months at the special member's prices plus a small charge for postage and handling. All selections and alternates will be described for me in advance in *The Jewish Book News* and I may decline any of them by returning the printed card provided.

☐ Check for $10.00 enclosed.

☐ Bill me.

☐ I am already a member of the Jewish Book Club, but would like to have the ENCYCLOPEDIC DICTIONARY OF JUDAICA at the special price of $10.00. Therefore, I agree to purchase an additional 4 selections or alternates during the next year.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

SIGNATURE

A Service of the American Jewish Committee

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Alumni Weekly, New America, Playboy, the *Progressive*, and the *Saturday Review*. His own syndicated newspaper column, in which he discussed current issues twice a week, is quoted directly or indirectly thirty-six times. Three Thomas open letters are quoted, as are scores of his letters to Socialist leaders or others commenting on issues.

What's that again, Mr. Starr?

A few of Mr. Starr's other statements are correct, but more are mistaken as they would not be had he read my book with professorial attention and an open mind. He manages a wisecrack by twisting my observation that Thomas may have studied Wodehouse more than Marx. He erroneously says that Thomas refused to serve in the armed forces; that he was a pacifist "most of his adult life"; that he "reverted to pacifism" in World War II when he did not, being opposed to U.S. involvement (until Pearl Harbor) for other reasons clearly explained in the book; and that Thomas, a grandmaster in irony, lacked "any sense of irony." The Henry Luce Professor's description of Thomas as "anti-Israel" is a libel on a man who was far from infallible but who was never anti-Israel, anti-Arab, or anti-anybody of good will.

While Mr. Starr's factual irresponsibility may not have been evident to COMMENTARY, his hostility to Thomas hangs out in broad daylight. The usual civility is to find someone reasonably impartial to review a book. It seems unlikely that COMMENTARY would exploit so palpable a grudge unless it shared the grudge.

W. A. SWANBERG
Newton, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

If one were hipped on the conspiracy theory of history, one might conclude that Roger Starr's vicious review of W.A. Swanberg's *Norman Thomas: The Last Idealist* was Mr. Starr's revenge as Henry Luce Professor of Urban Values at New York University against Swanberg, who received the Pulitzer Prize for his slashing biography, *Luce and His Empire*. But of course that must have been mere coincidence.

However, a reviewer is supposed to deal with the substance of a book, which Mr. Starr avoided doing. His first two paragraphs allegedly describe Swanberg's book in a way which made me rub my eyes to find out if Mr. Starr read the same book I did. He charges that Swanberg gave no excerpts from Thomas's speeches or books, and that those Thomas letters included by Swanberg "rarely helped the reader to follow the development of an opinion or position." I could list scores of excerpts which demonstrate that Mr. Starr is inaccurate. For instance, Thomas's speech to 15,000 at a Socialist picnic in Brooklyn in 1932:

> There are between ten and twelve million unemployed in the nation —200,000 in New York City alone without either work or relief.
>
> Men and women search the garbage cans . . . competing with rats and stray cats. . . . That's how the celebrated law of supply and demand works under capitalism. . . . Next winter we may see a complete breakdown, made more terrible by riots and actual starvation.
>
> No hope? No hope unless we declare war on poverty with the energy with which we warred on Germany. No hope, unless we seek to repeal unemployment with a hundred times the fervor and intelligence men seek to repeal the discredited 18th Amendment. . . .
>
> Here is where our Socialist plan begins. . . . We intend to subsidize consumption instead of letting the subsidies all go to producers seeking profit. . . . The federal government should grant emergency subsidies to unemployed families on a weekly basis. . . . We must begin to think in terms of ten billions. . . . The next great Socialist principle is the five-day week. . . . A system of unemployment insurance must be set up. . . . There is no conceivable physical reason why every American family should not be well fed, well clothed, well housed, possessing its own radio and automobile, and, above all, free from the dread fear of tomorrow which is the tyrant of our waking and sleeping hours.

But Mr. Starr's dismissal of Swanberg's book is only an excuse for his savage attack on Norman Thomas as a "moral absolutist" who never served the "cause of Progress."

As a close friend and associate of Norman Thomas (I was national secretary of the Socialist party from 1942 to 1950, ran Thomas's 1944 and 1948 presidential campaigns, and wrote *Norman Thomas: A Biography*, published by W.W. Norton in 1964), I can testify that Swanberg is far closer to the truth about Thomas than is Mr. Starr.

When he applied for membership in the Socialist party in 1918, Thomas wrote:

> Perhaps to certain members of the party my Socialism would not be of the most orthodox variety. As you know, I have a profound fear of the undue exaltation of the state and a profound faith that the new world we desire must depend upon freedom and fellowship rather than upon any sort of coercion whatsoever. I am interested in political parties only to the extent to which they may be serviceable in advancing certain ideals and in winning liberty for men and women. My accepting of the Socialist platform is on the basis of general principles rather than of details. If I were a farmer and lived in certain states of the Middle West, it is quite likely that I should be a member of the Nonpartisan League.

While Thomas was a pacifist during World War I, he supported the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War, and though he at first opposed American intervention in World War II (recalling the attacks on civil liberties during World War I and fearing that American entry in the war would create fascism at home), Thomas did *not* revert to pacifism. He changed his position to "critical support" of the war effort when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Starr questions Thomas's influence on Roosevelt and his advisers, arguing that the policies they adopted were "generally in the air as the business slump deepened in the early 30's." But Vermont Royster, in the *Wall Street Journal* in 1972, remembered it quite differently:

> Sometimes the mavericks have actually affected the outcome of a presidential election, and even more often they have turned out to have a major influence on the subsequent political direction of the country by a sort of delayed reaction to the policies of those who did get elected President. The most startling instance was 1932. FDR's New Deal has become so much a part of our political consciousness that we forget how little of it showed in his campaign against Hoover. If you want to see whence the New Deal sprang, turn to Norman Thomas and his Socialist party . . . recall the Socialist platform of 1932. It called for heavy appropriations for relief

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kool Filter Kings, 17 mg. "tar," 1.3 mg. nicotine; Viceroy Filter Kings, 16 mg. "tar," 1.0 mg. nicotine; Raleigh Filter Kings, 16 mg. "tar," 1.1 mg. nicotine; Belair Filter Kings, 15 mg. "tar," 1.0 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette, FTC Report Dec. '76.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Georgia Review

Spring 1977

Essays

"Faulkner's *Mosquitoes*" by Cleanth Brooks
"Fors" by Jacques Derrida
"Between the Acts: Jeanne Moreau's *Lumière*" by Geoffrey Hartman
"Ariachne's Broken Woof" by J. Hillis Miller
"The Artist, the Beautiful Girl, and the Crowd: The Case of Thomas Rowlandson" by Ronald Paulson
"Orientalism" by Edward W. Said

Fiction

"A Field of Snow on a Slope of the Rosenberg" by Guy Davenport
"The Bureaucracy of Ballroom Dancing" by Stephen Matanle

Poems by John Ashbery, Richard Emil Braun, Allen Grossman, Richard Howard, Dan Masterson, and Lewis Turco

Reviews by Richard H. King, Hubert McAlexander, Walter Michaels, Wesley A. Morris, Barry Weller, and David M. Wyatt

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Please enter my subscription to *The Georgia Review* for ____ 1 year ($3.00; Foreign $3.50) ____ 2 years (5.00; Foreign $6.00), beginning with the _____ issue.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Zip Code _____

The Georgia Review, edited by John T. Irwin and published quarterly at the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602.

The Georgia Review is not available at bookstores. It can be obtained only by subscription. Subscriptions will be entered only when payment is enclosed with this form.

and public works, government-employment aid, unemployment insurance, minimum-wage laws, relief for homeowners on their mortgages, an agricultural-support program, and an old-age pension program, Thomas also plugged for deficit financing, if needed, and a more steeply graduated income tax. Sound familiar? The lesson of this is that minority groups often defy the laws of gravity: that is, they exert political pull disproportionate to their mass. . . . Though the victory goes to others, they also serve.

In writing about Norman Thomas's trip to the Middle East in 1957, made at the suggestion of the American Jewish Committee (*not* 1956, Mr. Starr), Mr. Starr quotes Swanberg as describing Don Peretz, Thomas's travel companion, as "an anti-Zionist, though a Jew." Peretz, then a member of the foreign-affairs department of the American Jewish Committee, was a "*non*-Zionist" not an "*anti*-Zionist," and Swanberg accurately describes him as such. Mr. Starr apparently recognizes no distinction between the two, but he still owes it to the reader to quote correctly.

More about the trip. The American Jewish Committee asked Thomas to go to the Middle East because it felt that he might be able to secure fairer treatment for Jews in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. Thomas agreed to go, but added that he would also urge Israel to "hasten the process already begun of turning the Arabs who did not leave Israel into first- rather than second-class citizens."

When Thomas got to Israel, he reported that he found far more tolerance in discussions of Arab refugee and minority problems there than in the United States. But he did object to Israel's "linking of state and religion"—and so do many Israelis and many American Jews.

Mr. Starr insists that the cause of "Progress" was not "in the least served by . . . absolute conviction, absolute lack of any sense of irony, and absolute readiness for action—which defined the nature of Norman Thomas's 'idealism.' "

Pages could be filled demonstrating Thomas's search for complex answers to complex problems. But I plead guilty, for Thomas, to Mr. Starr's charge of "absolute readiness for action." "He has proved that there is something truly glorious in being forever engaged in the pursuit of justice and equality. He is one of the bravest men I ever met," wrote Martin Luther King, Jr. "Norman Thomas's courageous championship of exhausted sharecroppers in the South, of persecuted Japanese-Americans in World War II, of conscientious objectors in federal prisons, of exploited hospital workers in Northern cities, of Mississippi Negroes fighting for the right to vote, his lifelong campaign for economic and social democracy, and his unceasing drive for the maximum international cooperation for peace with justice have endeared him to millions around the globe." "Above all else," the Washington *Post* editorialized, on Thomas's seventy-fifth birthday, "he has been a conscience of the American people . . . among the most influential individuals in 20th-century politics."

I think their judgment was demonstrably better than that of COMMENTARY's "reviewer."

HARRY FLEISCHMAN
Wantagh, New York

ROGER STARR writes:

I am grateful that W. A. Swanberg had the time to count the thirty-seven "direct and indirect" quotations from Norman Thomas's books which he claims to have included in his 494 pages of text (one quote per 13½ pages for the statistical-minded). Since none of the books is listed as such in the index and few, if any, are identified in the text, the research must have been arduous. We can thus understand why Mr. Swanberg ran out of time in which to tell us how many quotations were in Thomas's words and how many were not. If Mr. Swanberg can find more time to spend on the matter, he might count the far more numerous quotations *about* Thomas which he inserted in his text. His purpose, I take it, was hagiography; but all the quotations reveal is the cheering fact that many Americans are ready to express warm sympathy for a political leader who strikes them as humane and courageous, without troubling themselves to examine his ideology.

None of Mr. Swanberg's quotations helps in the essential task of explaining why Thomas considered himself not a social democrat nor a social reformer, but a Socialist, presumably a Marxian Socialist. Although Thomas's definition of himself enabled him to avoid the entangling alliances with "impure"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Our Chicken Parts have no Back-Bone.

No Back-Bone Portions in Empire's CHICKEN LEGS and CHICKEN BREASTS

When cutting plump, juicy, tender chickens for those chicken parts you want, Empire removes the mostly unuseable BACK BONE portions.

Therefore, you get more of the delicious useable meat weight for which you are paying.

But, if you buy other chicken parts which do include back-bone portions, question how much useable weight you are getting, and whether you are getting your money's worth.

Your better value is from Empire—The Most Trusted Name in Kosher Poultry

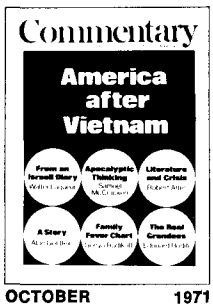
KOSHER
Empire
POULTRY

At better quality Kosher Butcher Shops, Food Stores and Dellys

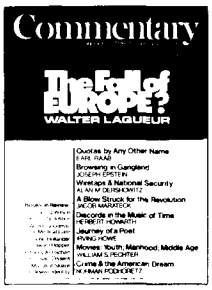
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHILE THEY LAST—

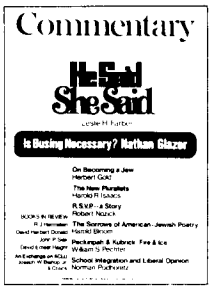
Complete your file of Commentary or send for past issues with articles of special interest—like those shown here—at $3.00 each.



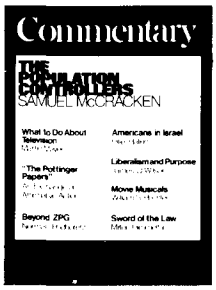
OCTOBER 1971



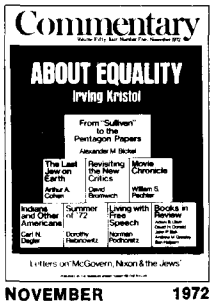
JANUARY 1972



MARCH 1972

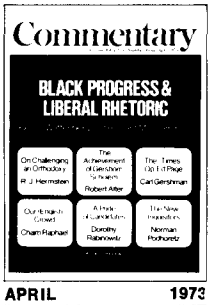


MAY 1972

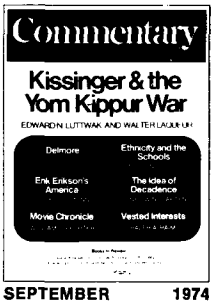


NOVEMBER 1972

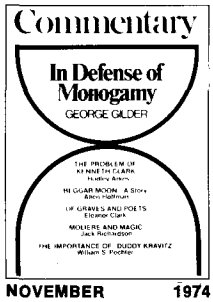
OCTOBER 1973



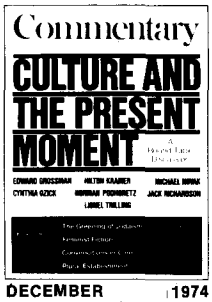
APRIL 1973



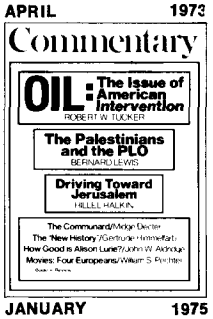
SEPTEMBER 1974



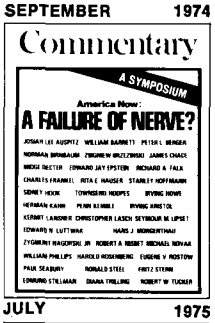
NOVEMBER 1974



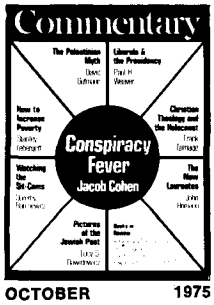
DECEMBER 1974



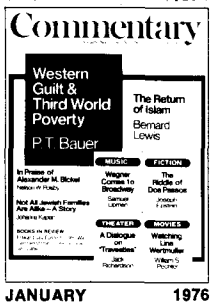
JANUARY 1975



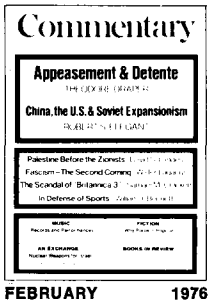
JULY 1975



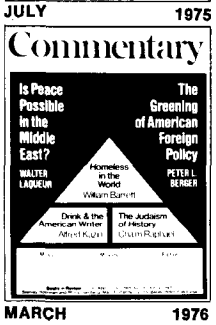
OCTOBER 1975



JANUARY 1976



FEBRUARY 1976



MARCH 1976

In limited quantities, most issues from recent years are still available—as listed below. **CIRCLE THE ONES YOU WANT,** and return the form with prepayment—promptly, to insure receiving those in short supply.

Commentary, 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022

Enclosed is my check for $_____ for the _____ back issues circled below at $3 each including postage and handling.

1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976
Jan	Jan	—	—	Jan	—	Jan	Jan	Jan
Feb	Feb	—	Feb	Feb	—	Feb	Feb	Feb
Mar	Mar	—	Mar	Mar	Mar	—	Mar	Mar
Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr	Apr
May	—	—	May	May	May	May	May	May
June	June	—	June	June	—	—	June	June
—	July	—	July	July	July	July	July	July
—	Aug	Aug	—	—	Aug	Aug	Aug	Aug
Sept	—	Sept	Sept	Sept	—	Sept	Sept	Sept
Oct	Oct	—	Oct	—	Oct	Oct	Oct	Oct
Nov	—	—	Nov	Nov	Nov	Nov	Nov	Nov
Dec	—	—	Dec	—	Dec	Dec	Dec	Dec

Name_____

Address_____

City, State & Zip Code_____

labor unions that have been central to social democracy and gradualist socialism in other countries, Mr. Swanberg never indicates what fundamental Socialist doctrines in economics, governance, and history Thomas accepted, enabling him to define himself politically as he did.

With regard to specific points, I did not mean to say that Thomas refused service in the armed forces, though he certainly would have, if asked. I said that he "advocated pacifism and refusing to serve in the nation's armed forces." I meant that he encouraged conscientious objection for those threatened by conscription. I would have written a clearer sentence if I had used the noun, "refusal," in place of the gerund, "refusing," but the distinction is hardly calamitous since I was not criticizing Thomas for his pacifism but rather praising his courage in holding "pure" positions despite public animosity.

Mr. Swanberg's objection to my assertion that Thomas reverted to pacifism after urging military volunteers to aid the Spanish republic is part of his general confusion on the issue of pacifism. Early in the book, Mr. Swanberg explains that Thomas believed a man could be a pacifist even without religious convictions; despite this clear statement, he later, in discussing Thomas's Spanish proposal, says that Thomas had, "of course, given up pacifism when he lost his faith in God." But if it was not a vestigial pacifism that inspired Thomas's tactical anti-war alliance with Charles Lindbergh and the America First Committee in 1941, we should have to search for some less praiseworthy psychological explanation for his blindness to the peril of a Nazi-fascist victory over Britain and France. Mr. Swanberg does not search for such a psychological alternative, and I think he should be content with my polite concession that Thomas reverted to pacifism.

When Mr. Swanberg insists that Thomas was a master of irony, he seems to mean that Thomas used ridicule or satire to attack political opponents. The irony I meant is a very different quality, the sense that one's own motivations may be other than what they seem, the perception that what one intends as altruism may indeed mask a drive for personal dominance. It occurred to me repeatedly in reading Mr. Swanberg's book—between the lines—that some of Thomas's undoubted political failures were the result of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his own incapacity to understand himself and his own motives. Mr. Swanberg avoids all such questions because, I think, he fears they may lead him away from simple adulation of the man he chooses to call "The Last Idealist."

My belief that Norman Thomas was complex and both more interesting and more exasperating than he appears in this book strikes Mr. Swanberg as hostility. I must admit that I believe Thomas's career to have failed, but if the editors of COMMENTARY asked me to review the book because they perceived in me a secret dislike for Thomas, the man, they knew more about me than I did. Mr. Swanberg says my hostility to Thomas hangs out in broad daylight. I find disquieting the symbolic overtones in such a description, but if anything hangs out, in my opinion, it is my regret that Mr. Swanberg failed to write a more penetrating book about what is a more interesting subject than he lets on.

Like Mr. Swanberg's book, Harry Fleischman's letter fails to provide any explanation of how Norman Thomas reached his Socialist positions, and what those positions literally implied. As though to dramatize his own misunderstanding, Mr. Fleischman reprints a 1932 speech which appears in Mr. Swanberg's book. The speech, though compassionate and moving, leaves the interested reader in complete mystification as to what Socialism meant to Thomas—then, earlier, or later. Why is Thomas's vision of a radio in every home and a car in every garage different from Herbert Hoover's dream of chickens and pots? How does the idea of subsidizing consumption improve on the idea of subsidizing production? How, under Socialism, would such a distinction be maintained? What has the five-day week to do with Socialism?

Following the Swanberg model, Mr. Fleischman then rolls out a series of testimonials. These support Thomas, the man, against an assertion of mine which Mr. Fleischman misquotes by a wide margin. He accuses me of saying that Thomas never served the cause of Progress. While it is true that I said that the qualities which Swanberg offers as defining "idealism" are not shown by him to have helped the cause of Progress, I also praised Thomas for "some genuinely constructive efforts to set against the failures" and specified the constructive efforts at some length.

Mr. Fleischman defends Thomas's position on Israel by saying that he was opposed to Israel's linking of religion and state. Although I did not comment on Mr. Swanberg's own identical assertion in this regard, it seems to me unspeakably naive to expect no linkage between religion and government (the nature of which linkage is difficult to define) in a state which came into existence precisely in response to religious persecution. Mr. Fleischman is, however, correct that Mr. Swanberg calls Don Peretz a "non-Zionist" and not an "anti-Zionist," as I reported.

I may be excused for finding greater interest in Mr. Fleischman's suggestion that I wrote a "vicious" review of the Swanberg book because I am Henry Luce Professor of Urban Values and seek to exact revenge for a book Mr. Swanberg wrote about Luce. This accusation will be found convincing by just about every paranoiac who doesn't know that I never heard of the Swanberg book on Luce until Mr. Fleischman mentioned it in his letter.

Still more fascinating is the sleazy device by which Mr. Fleischman seeks to avoid blame for originating his canard—he casts his slander in the form of a semi-denial, by suggesting that it would take "one hipped on the conspiracy theory" to frame it. I note that Mr. Fleischman boasts of having managed Thomas's campaign for the Presidency in 1948. If this is a sample of the moral level at which he conducted the campaign, I shall yet come to regret my vote for Thomas in that Wallace-studded year.

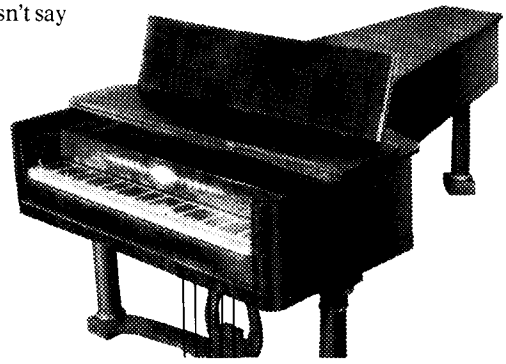
Encounter austria

I played Chopsticks on Beethoven's piano

It was in the house at Mölkerbastei 8 in Vienna, where the composer lived for many years. It's a museum now dedicated to his memory. I looked at the piano where Beethoven worked and I began to play it in my mind. I chose the only work I ever really learned! Being in the master's home, in this glorious city of music, gave me a feeling I can't describe in words. And my rendition of Chopsticks doesn't say it either.

Beethoven lived in Vienna, and Beethoven still lives here along with Strauss, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert and so many others. My mother was right. I should have practiced harder...

Visit Beethoven when you... Encounter Austria to know the heart of Europe.



AUSTRIA

I would like to Encounter Austria.

Name _____

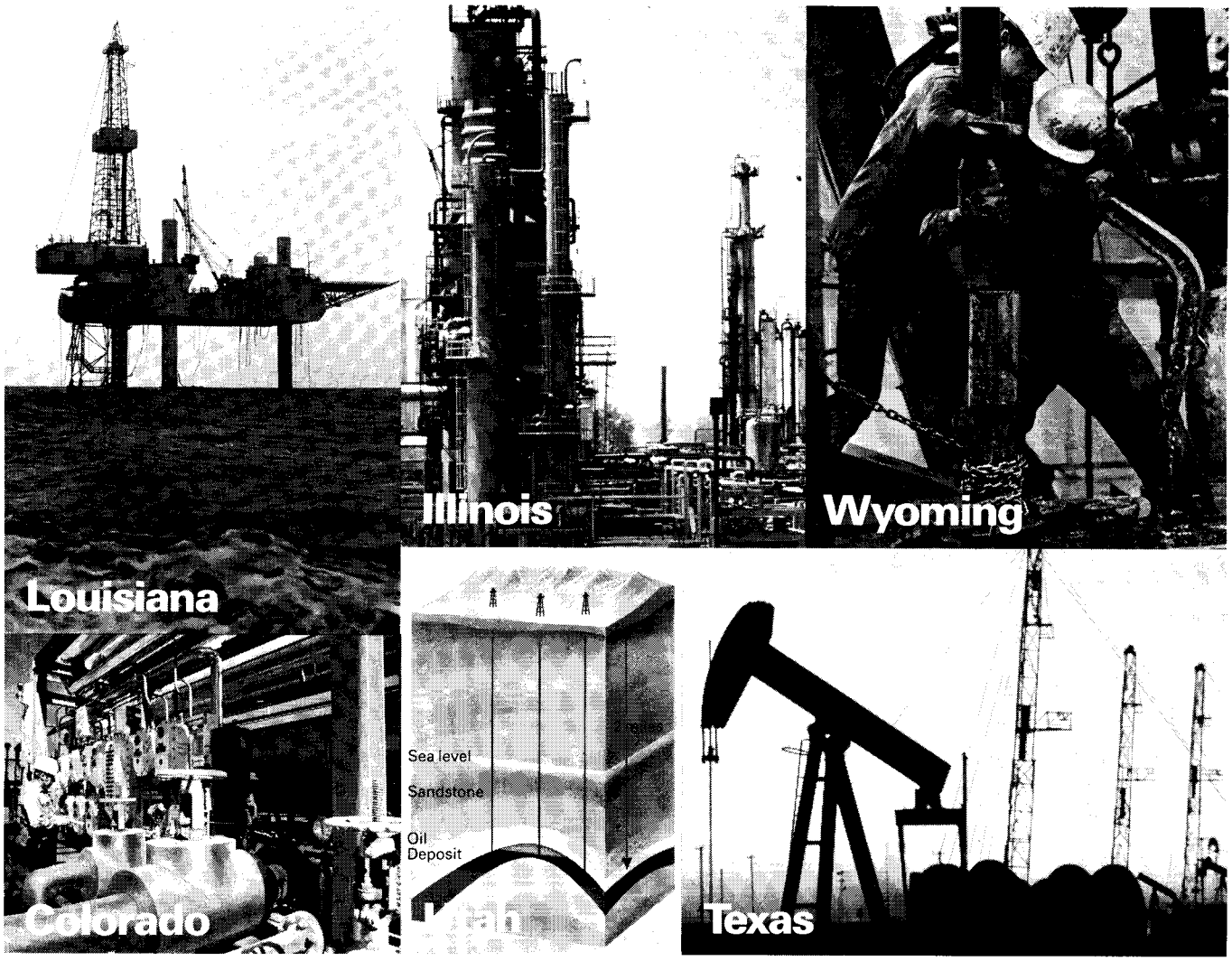
Address _____

City _____

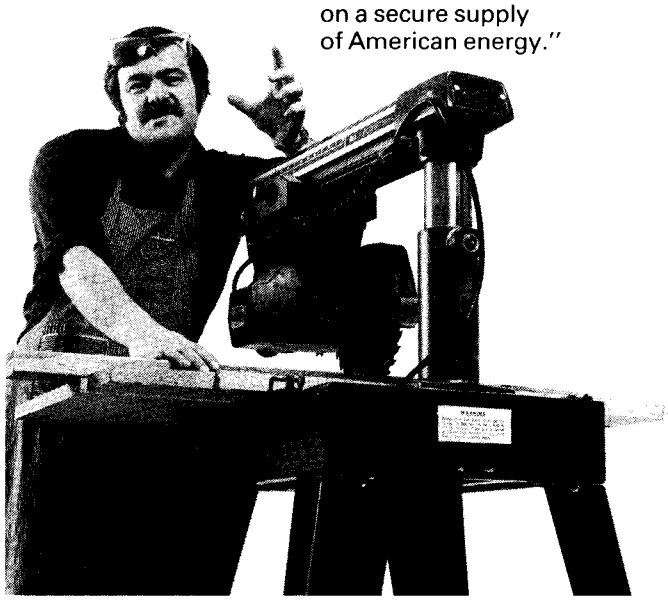
State _____ Zip _____

For your copy of our booklet ENCOUNTER AUSTRIA, and for information on Austrian Airlines, ask your travel agent or send coupon to your nearest Austrian National Tourist Office:
545 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y. 10017
3440 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90010
200 E. Randolph Drive, Suite 5130, Chicago, IL 60601
1007 N. W. 24th Ave., Portland, OR 97210

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Amoco is a leader in providing secure energy supplies here in America.



"American jobs depend on a secure supply of American energy."

A more secure supply of domestic energy is vital to America's future. And Amoco is a leader in providing it. For example, we've developed techniques for producing energy from heretofore inaccessible areas. We're presently untrapping oil from tight sandstone formations—two miles underground. America's jobs, and the future of our economy and our way of life, depend on a secure source of energy. Energy produced here in America. At Amoco, we're committed to doing our share to find and develop that energy.

AMOCO

Amoco Oil Company

Our job is you.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Against the New Economic Order

P. T. Bauer and B. S. Yamey

THE declaration on the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO)* was adopted in May 1974 without a vote (but with the expression of reservations by certain delegates) at the Sixth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly. A year later at its Seventh Special Session, "determined to eliminate injustice and inequality which afflict vast sections of humanity and to accelerate the development of developing countries," the General Assembly reaffirmed the "fundamental purposes" of the declaration, in particular "the imperative need of redressing the economic imbalance between developed and developing countries." Indeed, the resolution envisages elimination of this imbalance—that is, the equalization of per-capita incomes between rich and poor countries.†

The declaration contains a preamble, a list of twenty principles, and a detailed program of action including a special program to meet the needs of those developing countries "most seriously affected by economic crisis." The agenda of specified measures ranges widely to take in such items as the international monetary system, trade preferences, commodity schemes, and cooperation among the developing countries.

The declaration is in essence the latest stage in the advocacy of large-scale aid from the West to the less-developed world. What is new is the more explicit link between the alleged responsibility of the West for the poverty of the less-developed world and the *duty* of the West to "correct inequalities and redress existing injustices." It appears from the British government's reports on the Sixth and Seventh Special Sessions of the UN General Assembly that only one delegate denied responsibility for the "unfavorable economic situation of the developing countries." This was the Czech delegate who spoke for the Eastern bloc. The Western delegates either accepted responsibility by their silence, or were unwilling to reject the charges even if they thought them unfounded —a notable instance of the inability of the West to conduct its own ideological self-defense.

I

THE preamble to the NIEO declaration states that "the gap between the developed and the developing countries continues to widen." The idea of a wide and widening incomes gap between the West and the Third World is a major premise of the entire argument on which the NIEO program for international redistribution rests. It is also an almost universally accepted element of the conventional wisdom in these matters. Nevertheless, it is a misleading idea.

To begin with, it is inappropriate to lump together and average the incomes, living standards, and rates of growth of the Third World as a whole. The Third World is a huge and diverse aggregate which covers most of the globe and encompasses societies ranging from many millions of aborigines to many millions of inhabitants of huge cities. There are even wider differences in incomes and rates of progress within the Third World than within the West. Many Third World countries have in recent decades grown much faster than many Western countries, including the U.S. and Britain, so that the ratio of per-capita incomes between these Western countries and the faster-growing Third World countries has diminished. Examples of Third World countries which have grown rapidly include South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, the oil states of the Middle East, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela. And as Sir Arthur Lewis has noted: "We hear a lot about the relative stag-

P.T. BAUER is professor of economics at the London School of Economics, Fellow of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and Fellow of the British Academy. His latest book is *Dissent on Development* (Harvard University Press). Mr. Bauer contributed the widely-discussed article, "Western Guilt and Third World Poverty," to our January 1976 issue. B.S. YAMEY is professor of economics at the London School of Economics and a part-time member of the British Monopolies and Mergers Commission. His latest book is *The Economics of Future Trading* (Macmillan, London).

* In current parlance, which we shall follow, the NIEO refers primarily to a set of policies designed to reduce or even eliminate income differences between the West and the Less Developed Countries (LDC's). When referring to the formal UN declaration for the establishment of a NIEO we shall speak of the NIEO declaration.

† Quotations not otherwise identified are from two official United Kingdom publications: *Report on the Sixth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly* (Cmnd. 6031, 1975), and *Report on the Seventh Special Session . . .* (Cmnd. 6308, 1975).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nation of those parts of Africa which are on the fringes of the desert. Not many people know that some of the fastest growing countries in the world are in what is called 'black Africa' (to distinguish the center from both North and South)."* The rapid progress of large parts of the less-developed world and the virtual stagnation of others is simply one aspect of the diversity of the Third World.

Secondly, there is a gradation in international per-capita incomes, and any placing of a line of distinction between rich and poor countries is arbitrary. So the size of the much-advertised incomes gap is also arbitrary, because the gap depends on where the line is drawn.

Thirdly, the idea of the gap is static and a-historical. Frequent changes in the relative economic positions of countries are familiar in economic history and are currently evident—witness Germany and Japan on the one hand and Britain on the other hand. Countries have at times been promoted from the less-developed to the developed category (for example, Japan and Italy). Such reclassifications affect the size of the gap and preclude valid comparisons through time.

Fourthly, it is rarely specified whether the gap refers to ratios of incomes or to differences in absolute magnitudes. This is a serious source of confusion because the two measures must move at different rates, and often in opposite directions.

Fifthly, the gap often widens when economic conditions in poor countries improve, and even as a result of such improvement. This is because economic improvement results in longer life-expectancy, which in turn widens conventionally-measured income differences between rich and poor countries, since relatively more poor people then survive.

THE implications of these defects of the notion of the wide and widening gap are compounded by major conceptual problems involved in comparing incomes across different societies. For instance, national-income statistics are practically never adjusted to allow for differences in age composition. The proportion of children, however, is much larger in the Third World than in the West. Since both the incomes and the requirements of children are usually much lower than those of adults, comparisons which do not take age composition into account confuse differences in income with differences in age, and this obscures proper interpretation of the evidence.

Again, in national-income calculations major items of expenditure are treated as income when in fact they are costs necessary to *earn* income, as for instance the cost of traveling to work. These particular items are usually much more significant in the West than in poor countries. On the other hand, intra-family services and subsistence production, which are more important in poor countries, are apt to be ignored or greatly underestimated in national-income statistics. The use of conventional foreign-exchange rates in international-income comparisons is another major source of underestimation of Third World incomes.

These various biases and errors are far greater than is usually acknowledged. They have been investigated by Professor Dan Usher, an economist of international standing who lived and worked for several years in Thailand. In an article published in 1963 Usher argued that while conventional statistics put per-capita income of the United Kingdom at fourteen times that of Thailand, living standards in the United Kingdom were more like three times those of Thailand. He developed his arguments in a subsequent book, *The Price Mechanism and the Meaning of International Income Statistics* (1968), of which the principal conclusions are these:

> Many village communities seemed to have attained a standard of material comfort at least as high as that of slum dwellers in England or America. But at my desk I computed statistics of real national income showing people of underdeveloped countries, including Thailand, to be desperately if not impossibly poor. The contrast between what I saw and what I measured was so great that I came to believe that there must be some large and fundamental bias in the way income statistics are compiled.

And even Usher's estimates do not fully take into account differences in age distribution.

The impact of these biases is compounded by major inaccuracies in population statistics and by occasional manipulation of statistics for national or international political purposes. "We shall produce any statistic that we think will help us to get as much money out of the United States as we possibly can. Statistics which we do not have, but which we need to justify our demands, we shall simply fabricate," an unnamed civil servant in a Third World country is quoted as saying by O. Morgenstern in *On the Accuracy of Economic Observations* (1963).

The size of errors and biases affecting international comparisons can amount to several hundred per cent. Yet academic and official publications are full of estimates of per-capita incomes of Third World countries, and even of the entire Third World, which purport to measure incomes and income differences to the nearest dollar, and income changes to the tenth of a percentage point. Such estimates have often been invoked as the basis for far-reaching policies, including the determination of the volume and allocation of official aid. Yet unless these estimates take firmly into account the background and causes of inequality or income differences—including official policies, customs, and institutions—they are virtually without meaning.

In sum, customary assertions about the wide and widening gap do not indicate what it is and

* W. A. Lewis, *Aspects of Tropical Trade 1883-1965* (Stockholm, 1969), p. 15.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

between whom it exists, or over what period it is supposed to have widened, or the relative flimsiness of the statistics on which its putative existence is based.

II

IF THE idea of a wide and widening gap between the developed nations and the Third World is an idea full of holes, so is the notion, accepted equally as a dogmatic truth, that the poverty of Third World nations has been caused by actions of the West, both past and present.

A recent major address by President Julius K. Nyerere of Tanzania, perhaps the African leader most widely respected in the West, conveniently epitomizes this idea and the role it plays in the current advocacy of the NIEO. During a state visit to Britain in November 1975, President Nyerere delivered an address, "The Economic Challenge—Dialogue or Confrontation," in which he summarized his arguments for world redistribution of wealth:*

> I am saying it is not right that the vast majority of the world's people should be forced into the position of beggars, without dignity. In one world, as in one state, when I am rich because you are poor, and I am poor because you are rich, the transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor is a matter of right; it is not an appropriate matter for charity. . . . If the rich nations go on getting richer and richer at the expense of the poor, the poor of the world must demand a change, in the same way as the proletariat in the rich countries demanded change in the past.

The central thrust of these remarks, which reiterate the notion of the widening gap (with "rich nations . . . getting richer and richer at the expense of the poor"), is that the prosperity of the West has been taken from the Third World.† Similar assertions are commonplace in the West. This statement, for example, appears on a leaflet distributed by a student organization in Cambridge, England: "Almost all of us in this country belong to the small minority of those who made it to prosperity. But we climbed on the shoulders of the rest—the ones we left behind—abandoned to disease, poverty, and unemployment. We took the rubber from Malaya, the tea from India, raw materials from all over the world, and gave almost nothing in return."

In fact, Western governments and enterprise brought rubber *to* Malaya and tea *to* India, which were not indigenous to these countries. Similarly, before the West established economic and other contacts with it, Tanganyika, the largest part of Nyerere's present Tanzania, was a mainly empty, disease-ridden country. It is still backward and sparsely populated. Such economic development as has taken place is in large measure due to access to Western markets and to Western enterprise, capital, and ideas. The poorest groups in Tanzania are tribal people who have had little or no contact with the West. Their poverty cannot conceivably be attributed to the West.

THE West is also said to have become richer at the expense of the poor by insuring the continued economic *dependence* of the Third World. Thus, according to Dr. Nyerere:

> In a so-called free-market economy, economic power depends on wealth. The wealthy can determine what will be produced because only they have power to invest. They can determine the price levels of the goods produced in their own countries and elsewhere because they have the power to buy, or to withhold sale. The poor buy or sell at whatever price suits the wealthy.**

Dependence is said to be the central feature of the current international economic system, both when it takes the form of colonialism and also when it expresses itself in "neo-colonialism in all its forms" (to quote the NIEO declaration).

Brazil in the 19th century is often adduced as a case of such colonial or neo-colonial dependence: the backwardness of Brazil is explained in terms of its dependence on the U.S. market for coffee, its principal export, and of the profound influence on its economy of the heavy investments made by Great Britain. However, recent studies have demonstrated the invalidity of the general thesis and of its component parts. In the period of the free coffee market, 1857-1906, Brazil's income terms-of-trade improved at an average compound rate of about 4 per cent a year (and this ignores the steady improvement in the quality of imported goods). The coffee economy was the engine of growth which made possible the first transition to modernization and industrialization. According to one study, "Great Britain contributed significantly entrepreneurship, capital, social overhead, and liberal ideas of industrialism and progress which were of importance in the development of Brazilian industry and other economic activities." Early industrialization was assisted by "the supply of skilled immigrant labor that flowed into Brazil in response to the high returns available in the coffee plantations."†† Of course, the U.S. and British economies also gained from their transactions with the developing economy of Brazil, but these gains were not made at the expense of the Brazilians: they accompanied the gains Brazilians made from their ability to take advantage of the opportunities provided by international trade and the international flow of labor and capital.

Critics of the West also allege that Western interests obtained land and mining concessions in

---

* *African Affairs*, April 1976, pp. 242-50.

† A general discussion of this subject is in P.T. Bauer, "Western Guilt and Third World Poverty," COMMENTARY, January 1976.

** "The Economic Challenge," pp. 244-45.

†† Carlos Manuel Peláez, "The Theory and Reality of Imperialism in the Coffee Economy of Nineteenth-Century Brazil," *Economic History Review*, May 1976, pp. 276-90.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Third World far too cheaply because transactions were heavily biased in their favor. But when these deals were made the prospects of the projected mines or plantations were highly problematical. The transactions usually, though not always, took place in open-door conditions, and the terms reflected prospective risks and rewards. The eventual value of the assets acquired was established only years later, after the expenditure of much capital and effort. Many of these ventures failed and their Western sponsors lost heavily. (Even then the local economies usually benefited from the employment of local labor and other resources.) Subsequent partial or total expropriation of the assets, including those financed by the reinvestment of profits, has more than redressed any element of impropriety or unfair advantage. What is far more important is that these actions by many Third World governments (and the prospects of further expropriation) have discouraged Western investment in the discovery and development of natural resources, to the detriment of the Third World.

It is also commonly asserted that the West damaged the economic prospects of Third World countries by investing in directions dictated by Western trading and political interests, as for instance by building railways to serve the needs of external trade or of the military. It is, however, a non sequitur that these investments therefore did not help the local people. Not only did they provide employment but they also opened up markets, facilitated production for the market, increased personal mobility, and widened contacts. Moreover, such expenditure did not inhibit other profitable investments.

Particular Western policies and practices criticized in the NIEO literature for their role in perpetuating dependence include especially Western trade barriers to Third World exports. Such barriers do indeed retard the trading opportunities and the range of contacts of Third World countries, and thereby diminish the benefits their people (as well as those in the West) derive from economic intercourse with the West. However, the experience of manufacturing countries such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Israel, which have progressed rapidly, places the significance of these barriers in perspective.

Monopoly pricing of exports from the West is another factor cited as being harmful to the Third World. Obviously, importing countries would be better off if they could buy more cheaply; but in view of the multiplicity of sources of most manufactured imports, and the spread of manufacturing in recent decades, the impact of Western export monopolies on Third World living standards must be small and diminishing. We may note in passing that the impact on prices of certain Third World export monopolies and Third World taxation of exports is far more significant than that of the alleged Western business monopolies in export industries—witness the OPEC cartel.

Paradoxically, the misconception that the prosperity of the rich countries is secured through the impoverishment of the poor is most vocally asserted and most readily accepted when it is most obviously untrue. How else could President Nyerere get away with his allegations that wealth transfers to the Third World are a matter of right as reparations when it is so evident that the wealth of, say, North America, Japan, Scandinavia, and Switzerland has nothing whatever to do with the poverty of Tanzania or of the Third World in general? And the extreme backwardness of the aborigines, pygmies, nomads, or African tribesfolk can hardly be due to exploitation in international transactions, as these groups have few or no contacts with the rest of the world. Indeed, they are instances of the general relationship between material backwardness and the paucity of external contacts. The list of least-developed (so-called Fourth World) countries in UN agency documents consists predominantly of countries which do not spring to mind as involved even moderately in international trade, investment, and the activities of multinational corporations. The roll includes Burundi, Chad, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Rwanda, Afghanistan, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, Sikkim, Western Samoa, Yemen, and Haiti. Conversely, the economically most advanced countries and groups in the Third World are those with which the West has developed the most extensive and varied economic contacts—Malaysia, Singapore, Brazil, Venezuela, and Mexico.

Income and wealth are normally earned, that is produced, and not taken or extracted from others. Economic contacts with the West, which usually have benefited the West, have at the same time enabled people in Third World countries to improve their productivity by giving them access to markets, by making available to them a wide variety of goods, ideas, and information, and by supplying relatively scarce complementary resources such as enterprise, capital, and specific skills. Without these contacts the Third World would have remained much poorer than it now is.

III

Contrary to what is suggested in discussions of the NIEO, then, the world is not divided into sharply distinct homogeneous collectives with a widening gap between the two categories, a gap supposedly reflecting the exploitation or oppression of one category by the other. The world comprises a very large number of societies and groups which have emerged in varying degrees from a base of material poverty. In all cases, in the Third World as in the West, the principal determinants of economic achievement and performance have been human aptitudes, motivations, aspirations, mores, modes of thought, social institutions, and political arrangements. It is these which have either fostered or hindered the willingness to work, save, take risks, and per-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ceive and pursue economic opportunities. There is no reason why the fact that some countries have emerged from poverty sooner and to a greater extent than others should in any way have retarded the progress of these others. Indeed, the rise of some has made it easier for others to follow.

Nevertheless, the allegation persists that the income of the rich has been taken from the poor, and that poor countries are the powerless victims of external forces. It is this idea—that Third World poverty reflects inexorable constraints—which has stood behind the demand for international transfers of wealth ever since World War II. To this notion the NIEO has merely added an emphasis on international equality, redistribution, and the redress of historic grievance.

Official aid to poor countries has often been advocated, especially in its early days in the immediate postwar period, as necessary for breaking the vicious circle of poverty and stagnation. Poverty in this view sets up virtually prohibitive obstacles to its own conquest, and these obstacles can be overcome, if at all, only by the infusion of large amounts of aid from without. This notion is fanciful, as is clear from the rise from poverty to riches of innumerable individuals, groups, and societies; from the very existence of rich countries all of which began as poor; and also from the large-scale and often rapid progress of much of Asia, Africa, and Latin America long before foreign aid. It is also unwarranted condescension for opinion-makers in the West to suggest that the peoples of poor countries crave material progress but that unlike Westerners they cannot achieve it by themselves.

If intergovernmental transfers of wealth are not indispensable to the emergence from poverty, they do not even necessarily benefit economic development or the interests of the population in the recipient countries. As foreign aid has operated since World War II and is likely to operate under the NIEO, transfers of wealth may harm rather than benefit economic development and general living standards.

International transfers of wealth represent an inflow of resources into the recipient countries. But the policies of individual governments and the wider repercussions of the inflow can easily outweigh any net benefits. Many aid-recipient Third World governments, perhaps most, have pursued economic policies ranging from the wasteful to the inhuman, and damaging to the well-being and material progress of their people. Such policies include the enforced collectivization of farming; the expulsion of productive minorities or the imposition of economic restrictions on them; the establishment of state export monopolies which pay farmers a small fraction of the market value of their produce and deny them access to other marketing opportunities and to Western economic contacts; the proliferation of costly state trading, transport, banking, and industrial enterprises and monopolies; the suppression of private commercial activities in favor of state enterprises, including officially sponsored "cooperatives"; the widespread restrictive licensing of economic activity; the prohibition or restriction of private foreign capital (when shortage of capital is adduced in pleas for official aid); and wasteful policies of import-substitution and exchange controls, which usually raise the prices of consumer goods.

These policies have brought about prompt and readily observable reverses or even collapse in large sectors of the economy in many countries, including reversion to subsistence production following the destruction of the trading system. Recent examples so conspicuous that they have been reported in Western media notably friendly toward these governments include Burma, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire. In the context of the NIEO demands for international transfers of wealth, what is significant about these policies is, first, that they obviously widen the incomes gap between the affected countries and the West, thereby serving to justify the demands for increased aid, and, secondly, that the ability to pursue them is *bolstered* by aid, which indeed has often been necessary to keep the governments concerned financially afloat and to conceal from their people the worst effects of their economic programs.

International transfers of wealth also promote politicization of life in recipient countries. The resources go to governments rather than individuals, and thereby enlarge state power and patronage. This effect is reinforced by the preferential treatment accorded to governments engaged in so-called development planning and other measures which politicize societies to the point where all rewards, whether economic or social, are distributed by government fiat.

All this does not mean that official transfers of wealth *never* benefit development or the population at large. But a favorable outcome cannot be taken for granted, as is usually done in discussions of aid and the NIEO. The contribution of aid has at best been marginal, even in countries where domestic factors and policies have been propitious. The acute and continuing plight of many aid recipients after decades of aid; the inability of many Third World governments to service even extremely soft loans (evidenced in the NIEO demand for debt relief); and the frequent and critical shortage of food and other necessities —all suggest that official wealth transfers are ineffective for sustained economic improvement.

IV

Four widely supported components of the NIEO are staples of international conferences. They are commodity agreements, debt cancellation, official or enforced transfers of technology, and multinationalization of aid. Each is open to serious objection.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commodity agreements. The NIEO declaration emphasizes the need to achieve a "just and equitable relationship" between the prices of exports of developing countries and the prices of their imports, with the aim "of bringing about sustained improvement in their unsatisfactory terms of trade." But commodity agreements are an inappropriate instrument to this end, and are likely to operate perversely.

1. Exporters of primary products are not generally poor, let alone inevitably poor. The OPEC countries are only the limiting case showing how mistaken it is to identify primary producers with poor people, even primary producers in LDC's. Countries exporting primary products are usually among the most prosperous, and within the exporting countries the main beneficiaries of commodity agreements are relatively prosperous producers, politicians, and administrators.

2. Effective commodity agreements penalize potential producers who have to be excluded to insure restriction of supply. The frustrated producers are usually poorer, often much poorer, than the beneficiaries. This applies both within individual countries and also internationally.

3. Most major commodity agreements have covered or are likely to cover commodities used in products of mass consumption in both rich and poor countries. The higher prices put a tax on users, often regressively. The resulting hardships are especially anomalous at a time of worldwide inflation.

4. Commodity agreements are unstable. Success in raising the incomes of the favored producers and countries depends critically on the control of output and supply, not only of the commodity in question but also of close substitutes, whether agricultural or manufactured. The raising of the price itself stimulates the search for new sources and new substitutes. Except where the commodity occurs in a few places only, no scheme is likely to succeed in raising prices for long without large sums of money becoming tied up in unsold stocks; and increasing dissatisfaction can be expected from excluded producers and producing countries. The eventual collapse of the agreement drastically disturbs incomes and prices, and is likely to exacerbate tensions within and among the countries affected, besides inviting further demands for external aid.

Debt Cancellation. Large-scale debt cancellation as a form of official aid, another major plank of the NIEO, is similarly problematical. It is unrelated either to the incomes or to the development prospects of the beneficiaries. Indeed it clearly favors governments who (or whose predecessors) have proved their inability or unwillingness to use resources productively.

A large proportion of the debts of Third World governments (and, until recently, practically the entire indebtedness of African and Asian governments) stems from foreign-aid loans made on concessionary terms, the grant element in which has often been over half the nominal value and frequently over 90 per cent. Moreover, these loans are often supplemented by outright grants. The burden of the debts has already been much reduced by inflation and by substantial default, the latter usually masked by such euphemisms as rearrangement, renegotiation, rescheduling, or consolidation. The demands for further write-offs, usually total cancellation, suggest that the partial defaults were insufficient, making it clear that the resources have been used unproductively.

There are other anomalies. The beneficiaries are certainly not the poorest countries, as these have few external contacts and would have few external debts. Third World countries which defaulted on soft loans in the 1960's include, among others, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ghana, Indonesia, Peru, and Turkey, all of which are relatively prosperous. Again, most Third World debtor governments who press for these write-offs restrict the inflow and deployment of private capital. In many debtor countries there is large-scale expropriation of both domestic and foreign investment, and some debtor governments even grant aid to other governments. Debt cancellation discourages financial and economic prudence because the consequences of improvidence or even profligacy perversely serve to reinforce the pleas for the write-off of debts. The now-standard practice of expressing external debts as a percentage of foreign-exchange earnings—cited in support of the alleged impossibility of honoring debts—obscures both the fact that the resources previously received have been used unproductively, and the fact that export earnings are much affected by domestic monetary and fiscal policy.

Transfer of technology. Proposals for the transfer of technology to the Third World are vague about method and objectives. They often are no more than expressions of hostility to the West and to multinational companies accused of withholding technology from the Third World by patents and industrial secrecy. At the same time, the West generally and the multinationals in particular are accused of introducing unsuitable advanced technology into the Third World and of inducing extravagant consumption habits and cultural dependence in Third World populations who are assumed to have no minds of their own and are regarded as puppets.

The truth is that restrictions imposed by Third World governments on external commercial contacts are by far the greatest obstacle to the inflow of productive wealth and resources. Moreover, in much the same way as capital is used most productively by those who have either accumulated it or obtained it commercially, so technology is used most effectively by those who have developed or purchased it (as was the case in Japan). In the public sector, free or subsidized technology often encourages show projects unsuitable to local con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ditions; in the private sector the distribution of subsidized technology is likely to be expensive and haphazard. The disappointment that ensues when the subsidized technology fails to satisfy expectations once again exacerbates tension and promotes further demands for wealth transfers.

Multinationalization of aid. It is often proposed that wealth transfers be channeled through the international organizations instead of bilaterally, on the grounds that this would make allocation more objective and would remove the sense of resentment and humiliation on the part of recipients. But multinational aid is open to the same objections as bilateral aid, and to others besides.

Multinational aid severs any connection between the suppliers of subsidized capital and its users. It also deprives legislators in the donor countries, and *a fortiori* the taxpayers (the real donors), of even the semblance of surveillance or control over the spending of funds. Nor is multinationalization likely to improve the allocation of international transfers of wealth. The criteria of multinational transfers have little to do either with productive deployment of capital or with relief of poverty. Policy-makers and staff members of the international organizations may be expected to press for increases in the volume of aid and in the number of recipient governments, especially those promoting state-controlled economies.

V

The announcement of the NIEO practically coincided with the silver jubilee of official aid, which began with President Truman's Point Four Program in 1949. In those days, the advocates of aid claimed that its aim would be achieved by relatively modest spending over a few years. Today, after the spending of many billions of dollars, the volume of official aid continues to expand. Political and economic developments both within the Third World and in the West—not least among them the radically egalitarian ideology embodied in the NIEO—sustain the demand for ever greater transfers of wealth.

According to the second principle of the NIEO declaration, there should be the "broadest cooperation of all the member states of the international community, based on equity, whereby the prevailing disparities in the world may be banished and prosperity secured for all." Large-scale transfer of wealth will not, however, insure the prosperity of any particular Third World country, let alone the Third World as a whole. This is so simply because economic achievement and progress depend primarily on favorable domestic factors, including government policies. The presence of favorable factors cannot be taken for granted anywhere, and indeed are singularly absent in many Third World countries. While wealth transfers would reduce income differences between the West and the Third World, they would do so principally by reducing incomes in the West rather than by increasing productivity, and hence sustainable incomes, in the Third World. Moreover, the NIEO program is not likely to promote harmony among Third World countries. Contention is bound to arise over the division of the wealth to be transferred and over the effects of NIEO policies such as commodity schemes and industrial protection.

Even if international income differences were to narrow appreciably, this would not abate egalitarian passions. Tocqueville observed that when social differences have narrowed, the remaining ones appear especially objectionable. This is the more likely when the reduction in differences has been brought about by political pressure, because there is then no reason for stopping at any particular stage. Once the case for a policy like that of the NIEO for the international transfer of wealth is taken for granted, virtually anything that happens can be adduced in support of its continuation or reinforcement. Indeed, once wealth transfers are under way, the criteria for their maintenance and expansion can be plausibly shifted from, say, net income and living standards to growth rates, or to the position of the poorest, the quality of life, the condition of the environment, and so on. Thus, Third World pressures for large-scale wealth transfers from the West are likely to persist and intensify.

If such pressures are successful, the result will be not an alleviation of the miseries of poverty, but the spread of totalitarian government and a further erosion of the position of the West. These effects will be greatly intensified if international wealth transfers are combined with radically egalitarian measures within countries of the West and of the Third World. That such radical egalitarianism is central to the thinking of prominent advocates of the NIEO is evident in the statement by Dr. Nyerere that the "eradication of poverty" envisaged and demanded will involve "a ceiling on wealth for individuals and nations, as well as deliberate action to transfer resources from the rich to the poor within and across national boundaries."*

The pursuit of these ends will require an immense extension of the use of the coercive power of governments over individuals, for nothing else would be capable of bringing about any substantial homogenization, nationally as well as internationally, of highly diverse nations, societies, groups, and individuals. It will provoke acute political and social tensions. It will divert people's energies and resources from economic to political activity. A new international economic order may indeed emerge—but it will not be one either of freedom or of prosperity.

* "The Economic Challenge," p. 247.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The American Stake in Israel

Eugene V. Rostow

THE place of Israel in the evolution of American foreign policy since 1945 is a cautionary tale for all who study the art, or practice it, and for all who must live with American foreign policy as citizens, as allies, or as adversaries. It is the perfect case history through which to observe the development of our foreign policy since Truman. Every factor shaping our policy during this period has been at work with regard to Israel: the influence of strategic interests, and the ways in which our perception of those interests has changed in response to the changing character of Soviet policy, the Sino-Soviet split, and the decline of the European political and military presence in the world beyond Europe; the influence of our isolationist tradition, and of isolationist, anti-imperialist, and anti-colonialist attitudes, which continue to have a tenacious grip on our minds and feelings even though the experience on which they rest has become obsolete; our reluctant recognition of our security interest in the fate of Europe (and Japan), and our resistance to involvement in the vast and turbulent world beyond those narrow perimeters; the influence of moral conviction, sympathy, and democratic principle; the influence of international law on international politics, and vice versa, the unresolved question of the place of the United Nations charter in our foreign policy, and the extent to which our policy is or should be committed to the rules of the charter against the international use of force; and, finally, the influence of the most important and most neglected category among the causes of history, that of the so-called "irrational factors," which include stupidity, pride, accident, misperceptions of reality, psychological defense mechanisms for screening out unpleasant realities, failures of nerve, feelings of guilt, and paralysis of the instinct for self-preservation. Perhaps I should add the death wish itself.

EUGENE V. ROSTOW is Sterling Professor of Law at Yale Law School and was Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs from 1966 to 1969. Among his books are *Peace in the Balance* and *Law, Power, and the Pursuit of Peace*. A summary of the present essay was delivered at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association last December, in a symposium sponsored jointly by the AHA and the American Jewish Historical Society.

I

BUT it is impossible to tell the story of the American involvement in the Middle East without at least a brief glance at the background. Let me then start by recalling a few aspects of the pre-1946 situation which are of particular relevance to the policy conflicts of today.

The British Mandate for Palestine was exceptional among the League of Nations Mandates. It established "a sacred trust" not only for the people of the territory, but also for Jews throughout the world, who were endowed by the instrument with the right to migrate to Palestine if they wished to do so. The Mandate expressly recognized the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine as the ground for reconstituting their national home in that country. As the mandatory power, Britain was made "responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative, and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home, . . . and the development of self-governing institutions . . . it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

Arab spokesmen have always taken the view, which remains central to their position today, that the Mandate was beyond the powers of the League of Nations. All that flowed from the Mandate should therefore be treated as a nullity. Despite contrary rulings by the International Court of Justice and the United Nations Security Council, the Arabs proceed from this premise to the startling conclusion that the Arab states have a right to make war on Israel in the name of "the self-determination of peoples." This reasoning lies behind the Arab practice of referring to Israel as "occupied Palestine" in maps, books, newspapers, and speeches, and in their campaigns to deny Israel diplomatic recognition, and to expel it from the United Nations. Arab spokesmen often point out that the United Nations which recognized Israel in 1949 was a body of some fifty states, much smaller than the United Nations today.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Such statements ignore the fact that the contemporary Security Council, on October 22, 1973, passed a mandatory resolution, Resolution 338, imposing upon the states which are parties to the conflict a binding legal obligation to make a just and durable peace with Israel, in accordance with the principles and provisions of Security Council Resolution 242, adopted in 1967.

As an argument of law and of history, the Arab position cannot be reconciled with the charter of the United Nations or with decisions of the International Court of Justice and the Security Council, and indeed no serious attempt has been made to do so. But it is powerful medicine in a world where the restraining influence of the charter on political behavior is becoming weaker every year.

The territory of the Mandate constitutes the only conceivable definition for the word "Palestine" as a matter of international politics and international law. The Mandate included what are now Israel, Jordan, and the territories in dispute between them—the Gaza Strip and the West Bank area. In 1922, acting against the judgment of the League Mandates Commission, and with doubtful legality, the British prohibited or at least "postponed" Jewish settlement in the Transjordanian province of the Mandate. Transjordan remained part of the Mandate, however, until May 22, 1946, when it became a separate state. In view of current controversies, it should be noted that Britain's 1922 decision did not apply to the area now known as the West Bank, which remained open to Jewish settlement throughout the Mandate period. Thus the term "Palestinian" is properly used not only for Arabs from the West Bank or the Gaza Strip, but for all Jews, as well as Christian or Muslim Arabs, Druses, Circassians, and others who, under the Mandate, had the right to live in its boundaries. King Hussein and Prime Minister Rabin are Palestinians as well as Yasir Arafat.

By the late 1930's, Britain had tentatively reached the conclusion that the twin purposes of the Mandate were incompatible. Arab massacres, rioting, and other pressures were directed against the increasing Jewish migration to Palestine in the 1920's, and again following the rise of Hitler, and indeed against the rapid development of the Jewish National Home as a polity capable of becoming a state. In order to mollify the Arabs, the British cut down Jewish immigration, and announced a policy of terminating immigration completely after a period of years. This policy failed in its primary purpose. The Arabs were not mollified or pacified, but further inflamed by the prospect of success. And British concessions on immigration aroused opposition at home and in Palestine, as well as in the Mandates Commission of the League, and in the United States and other countries sympathetic to the Zionist dream. A final British decision on the future of Palestine was postponed until after World War II. But the policy of limiting immigration continued during the war, despite the harrowing position of the Jews in occupied Europe.

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, the outcry about limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine became intense in the United States, in Great Britain, and above all in the Jewish community of Palestine. It was difficult to remain calm before the spectacle of Jewish survivors of the Nazi camps and other displaced persons being turned back from Palestine, and kept behind barbed wire on Cyprus, or drowned at sea.

Palestine was being consumed in a storm of irrationality and violence, which affected the rationality of the policies of nearly all the nations.

II

BEFORE resolving to give up the Mandate, Britain turned to the United States for cooperation, as it did in the case of Greece at roughly the same time. The first general question I should like to pose—a question I regard as critical to the way we have perceived Middle Eastern affairs ever since—is why the American reaction to the British dilemma in Greece was so different from its response to the Palestine question.

The Greek and the Palestine crises of the late 1940's occurred at about the same time, and in the same overall context of world politics. They directly affected the same national-security interests of the United States. In each case, Britain had turned to us for help in coping with problems it felt to be beyond its power, or its political will. In Greece, we reacted firmly and decisively. In Palestine, we put our heads down, and hoped for a miracle.

The problem in Greece was simple, as compared with that in Palestine. The Soviet Union was sending arms and troops into Greece to support a Communist revolt. The situation was deteriorating rapidly, threatening the security of Italy and the allied position in the Eastern Mediterranean. We thought Stalin had promised Churchill to respect the British interest in Greece. And what the Soviets were doing there was an open violation of the charter of the United Nations, less than two years old. The British also asked us to take some of the responsibility for Palestine. In the world of postwar superpowers, Britain and France no longer had the strength or the will to conduct the orchestra of world politics: above all, they could not face down the Soviet Union without American support. This was a political condition we had long anticipated and feared. Before the pressures of Soviet policy made manifest in Eastern Europe and Iran, and foreshadowed in the Middle East, we realized that the new state of things was upon us.

Offstage, the hopes of the immediate postwar period were nearly gone. The Soviets clearly had no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intention of honoring their pledge to allow free elections in Eastern Europe. Communist regimes were installed throughout the region except for Czechoslovakia, and the Czech regime was in peril. Germany was one long wrangle with the Soviets, and shadows were falling over Berlin.

THUS the background of the Greek and of the Palestinian crises was the same. The interests at stake were closely related. But the United States reacted to them quite differently.

Why?

When I had my first working contact with the State Department, shortly after Pearl Harbor, its prevailing outlook was still that of the world before 1914. The basic rule was "Keep out of trouble"—a maxim applied with equal zeal to the officer as bureaucrat and to the United States as a participant in world affairs. Except for the war, which was viewed as a technical problem separate from politics, initiatives, responsibilities, actions, and commitments were to be left at all costs to the British and the French. We criticized what the British and the French did and failed to do, and insisted on our rights within a system we seemed to think they would always maintain. But the habits of isolation, and the memory of Wilson's fate, had burned deep. Indeed, I heard the same old slogan in the State Department—"Leave it to the British"—as late as 1968, with regard to dangerous and important problems in Africa and the Persian Gulf.

It is difficult to convey the atmosphere of the State Department in those remote times. For present purposes, one anecdote will have to suffice. Before I went out to Algiers in 1943, I called on Ray Atherton to say goodbye. Atherton was one of the avatars of the foreign service of the day, an intelligent, cultivated, worldly man of wit, charm, and style, and a most effective official, in charge of European affairs. Algiers came within his jurisdiction, as part of French North Africa. He sent me off with some classic State Department advice. "Don't try so hard," he said. "Nothing can prevent France from going Communist after the war, so why struggle?"

There were exceptions, of course—officials with a sense of history who understood that the old system was dissolving before our eyes and would soon be swept away. Dean Acheson, then an Assistant Secretary of State, was the leader and natural hero of this group within the State Department and the other departments concerned with foreign policy. His memoirs give a modest account of what was accomplished, both with regard to the political and economic problems of the war itself, and in postwar planning for Dumbarton Oaks, Bretton Woods, and other celebrated occasions.

These officials knew that our most fundamental national interests required us to work with all our energy, during the war and after it, to achieve relationships with Europe and Japan, and, if at all possible, with the Soviet Union as well, on the basis of which a new and more stable political order could be built. And they realized that the United States would have to take a leading and responsible part in that effort—indeed, that the task would be beyond the strength of the European powers alone. Men and women of this outlook saw the war as a political phenomenon—a phenomenon of political pathology, caused by the breakdown of the international system launched at the Congress of Vienna, and the disappearance of its rules. Throughout World War II, they argued that the war should be fought with the necessities of the future in mind.

But the "exceptional" officers, though not without influence, were a minority, at least until 1947.

In that year, American policy started on a mutation which has by no means run its course. The precipitating cause of the change was the fact that the Soviet Union was sending arms and men to support a Communist revolt in Greece. But the deeper cause was the realization, which the Soviet threat to Greece made obvious, that unless the United States fully accepted ongoing responsibility as the leader of the democratic coalition, Europe itself would fall under Soviet control, and the balance of power on which our primitive safety depended would be dangerously altered against us. The government of the United States and, at an instinctive level at least, our public opinion as well, had long understood our absolutely bedrock national interest in assuring the independence and the democratic character of Western Europe, and in preventing any potential adversary from gaining control of its territory, people, and resources. That, of course, was why we fought in both world wars. Against the background of Soviet behavior in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, and our growing frustration with the situation in Germany, the Soviet thrust for Greece touched this vital nerve. Our response was electric.

Within a remarkably short period of time, President Truman and Congress, backed by a strong, bipartisan public opinion, articulated, ratified, and began to carry out policies which still define the structure and content of our foreign policy, despite the ebb and flow of events and of public opinion since that time. Most of the ideas out of which this policy was constructed had been drafted and debated within the government during World War II. Starting in 1946 and 1947, their time had come.

The Truman Doctrine was announced, applying the Wilsonian proposition that peace is "indivisible," and formulating a policy of collective security: that the United States and its allies would insist on the enforcement of the United Nations charter through the Security Council or, failing that remedy, through regional arrangements of self-defense, at least against aggression conducted or sponsored by the Communist states or their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

proxies. That policy led to the checking of Soviet expansion in Iran, Turkey, Greece, Berlin, and South Korea, and the development of a network of alliances designed to deter aggression and maintain the balance of power.

On the foundation of the Truman Doctrine—the policy of "containment," as it used to be called—the other familiar features of our foreign policy were put into place: the Marshall Plan, progenitor of programs which led to the formation of the European Community, the reconstruction of Japan, and the development of the industrialized democracies as an integrated and extremely successful capitalist world economy; the Point Four program, leading to comparable processes of economic development for many of the nations of the Third World; the Baruch Plan, the first step in a continuing if thus far unsuccessful effort to eliminate nuclear weapons as instruments of war and make nuclear technology an international resource for peaceful purposes; the many initiatives, going beyond those of the Marshall Plan and that of the Baruch Plan, to improve relations with the Soviet Union, and achieve conditions of true détente with that nation; and finally, starting in 1949, policies intended to end what Acheson then called the "unnatural" alliance between China and the Soviet Union, and thereby to achieve better and more stable relations among the United States and both those countries.

I do not mean to suggest that our foreign policy has been frozen in amber since the late 1940's and early 1950's, or that it has been pursued with complete coherence and consistency since that creative moment. Of course that is not the case. But the main ideas of the Truman-Acheson foreign policy have remained vital sources of our behavior throughout the period, as a considered national response to the hazards and opportunities of the world as it is. While those ideas have been questioned in recent years, in the shadow of Korea and Vietnam, no alternative line of policy has been proposed or accepted to replace them. They remain the basis for our actions in the theater of world politics, despite the uncertainty, for the moment, of the public opinion needed to sustain them.

WHILE the British quandary in Greece triggered an American response of remarkable dimensions, the British quandary in Palestine resulted only in American hand-wringing, dithering, ineffectiveness, and indeed irresponsibility. For the Middle East, unlike Greece or Turkey, or Iran for that matter, our motto remained the old isolationist battlecry, "Let the British do it."

A prolonged Anglo-American diplomatic effort during 1945, 1946, and 1947 failed to produce a common policy, or in fact any policy at all on the part of the American government. Starting in 1945, there were worthy reports by Anglo-American committees of distinguished citizens, endless meetings, correspondence, cables, and memoranda of conversations galore. But while the United States government freely and publicly advised the British government what to do and how to do it, we flatly refused to consider sharing the British Mandate, or taking on a United Nations Trusteeship ourselves. The notion of exposing American troops to the ambushes of Arab and Jewish terrorists was repulsive. We were unwilling to increase the risks to our oil interests in the area, or so to inflame Arab opinion against the West as to create an opportunity for Soviet penetration. So we did little or nothing beyond the making of occasional political gestures, and hoping for the best.

Beset in India, Egypt, and even Transjordan, as well as Palestine, and discouraged by the position of the American government, the British decided to place the future of what was left of the mandated territory before the United Nations. In 1947, the General Assembly, following the advice of its special committee on Palestine, recommended to the Security Council a plan for the partition of the remainder of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state, joined in economic union, with a special regime for Jerusalem. The Jewish Agency accepted the 1947 Partition Plan. The Arab states announced that they would use force to oppose the Assembly's plan, which was denounced again as beyond the powers of the United Nations, and a violation of the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The General Assembly warned the Security Council that unless it exercised its ultimate authority over threats to the peace, there would almost surely be war in the area. That fact was in any event obvious to every reader of newspapers.

In a sequence of shameful irresponsibility, the Security Council did nothing to prevent the war, or to carry out the recommendations of the General Assembly, or any other plan for the peaceful resolution of the dispute. At the last moment, the United States even proposed abandoning the Partition Plan, which it had supported, and substituting for it a United Nations Trusteeship.

These ineffectual and unrealistic maneuvers were ended in 1948 when Israel declared its independence—making appropriate reference to the recommendations of the General Assembly's Partition Plan—and was recognized by the United States, the Soviet Union, and other states. Five Arab states then marched against Israel, united in their desire to destroy Israel, but deeply divided about what they should do next. The forces of Jordan, still under British guidance, probably intended only to occupy Jerusalem in addition to the areas indicated as Arab in the General Assembly's Partition Plan. Jordan considered itself then—and still considers itself—the Arab Palestinian state, which should divide the territory of the Mandate with Israel. Egypt, pursuing policies which it has followed for millennia, wished to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

take over the area itself, an ambition which concerns Riyadh, Baghdad, and Teheran as much today as it did in ancient times. Syria, too, wished to occupy the area, in the name of a conception of a Greater Syria, based not only on ancient history, but on the administrative arrangements of the Ottoman Empire. These intense rivalries continue unabated.

Until the first round of the fighting reached its natural end, and the belligerents were willing to accept at least a truce, the Security Council did nothing to stop the war, to condemn and punish the aggressors, or to resolve the issues by peaceful means. That pattern prevailed through several more rounds of warfare, and Count Bernadotte's attempt at mediation, until it was clear that Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan were incapable of further fighting, and that Egypt had been defeated. Then the Security Council insisted that the parties go beyond a short-time truce or cease-fire, and negotiate armistice agreements, to be followed shortly by agreements of peace.

By implication, at least, these decisions of the Security Council rule on some of the most fundamental issues of the dispute: that Israel exists of right as a state entitled to the full protection of the charter; that its neighbors are under obligation to make peace with Israel; that Jordan and Israel are the successor states to the Mandate, whose territories should be divided between them; that no state of belligerency can be acknowledged to exist between Israel and its neighbors; and that the guidelines for the peace between Israel and Jordan are not the boundary lines of the Partition Plan recommended by the General Assembly in 1947, and rejected by the Arabs, but the armistice agreements they negotiated and accepted in 1949.

WHY was the policy of the United States in Palestine so different from its policies of the same period with respect to Iran, Turkey, Greece, and Berlin?

Was it because the quarrel was not visibly and directly over European territory? Despite the universality of its language, the Truman Doctrine seemed at first to be focused primarily on the precarious situation of postwar Europe, where a complete Communist takeover remained a distinct possibility. Reluctantly and against the weight of our isolationist tradition, we had accepted the necessity for keeping Western Europe and Japan out of Soviet hands in order to preserve and maintain a balance of power. But we found it hard to believe that the vital interests of the nation required us to venture into the swamps of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

The whole of our postwar foreign policy has indeed been bedeviled by a tension between our basic policy of support for the independence of Western Europe, and our distaste for supporting British, French, Dutch, Belgian, or Portuguese policies in Asia, Africa, or the Middle East. Our alliance with Europe, the cornerstone of our security position, seemed to imply cooperation with the European nations outside Europe. But we have never been able to do this effectively. When our policy of partnership with Europe has led us into dilemmas of this order with regard to problems outside Europe, the result has generally been paralysis, frustration, half-heartedness, or worse—as was the case most notably in Indochina, and in the Middle East again in 1956.

Is this the tragic element, perhaps the tragic flaw, in American thought about the security of the nation in the new order of world politics which has emerged from the collapse of Europe, the end of the European empires, save that of Russia, and the emergence of the Soviet Union, China, and Japan as important actors in world politics?

Or was our reaction to the Palestine crisis affected by the fact that while the Soviet Union was directly responsible for the attacks on Iran, Turkey, Greece, and Berlin, in Palestine the Soviet Union had supported Israel for about eighteen months, and opposed the Arab cause? Without Czech arms in 1948, Israel would have had even greater difficulties in the first critical battles of the 1948-49 war. Soviet policy at that time was concerned with weakening Britain and France in the Mediterranean. The Soviet decision to reverse its policy, and exploit Arab hostility to the existence of Israel as an instrument of its own expansion in the area, was several years away.

Whatever the causes, we did what we did in 1947 and in the long cycle of Middle East troubles thereafter, sometimes pursuing active policies of pacification and security with Britain and France, and at others nearly paralyzed by our preconceptions as we watched Britain and France being driven out of the area, and the Soviet Union filling the vacuum, step by step. But there were, after all, alternative policies which might have been pursued.

During the Palestine crisis and the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948-49, the United States was never able to make up its mind about its national interest in the controversy. It is hardly a reproach to the policy-makers of the day that they did not anticipate the Soviet military build-up after the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, and the worldwide campaigns of expansion based on that build-up. One should not expect our policy-planners to be Delphic oracles.

But it is not too much to have expected them to base their plans on the assumption that the British and French political and military positions in the area would be washed away in the anti-imperialist tide. It was apparent during World War II that no political force could prevent the liquidation after the war of all the European empires, except perhaps the Russian. Except for Russia, no European power was prepared to use force on the scale necessary for suc-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cess in preserving its empire. The European empires had always been viewed in Europe as trusteeships which would evolve into independent nations under the benign influence of education in the ideas of European liberalism. It should have been, and indeed it was, obvious to our government that the Middle East was not an exception. Unless measures were taken, the withdrawal of Britain and France from their military positions in the Middle East would result in a vacuum which the Soviets would surely try to fill, if we did not join with the British, the French, and the emerging states of the region to prevent any hostile forces from taking control of the area. After all, the Middle East was within easy reach of the Soviet land mass, and altogether accessible to Soviet land, naval, and air forces. The first pressures of Soviet postwar expansion were felt in Iran and Turkey. Both we and the Russians were acutely conscious of the strategic importance of the space and the oil of the Middle East to the economies and military establishments of Europe and the United States, and to their security.

In short, we should have perceived the Middle East as part of the security problem of Europe—and therefore of the United States—certainly by 1946 and 1947. There were State Department officers who had urged this point of view throughout the war, and after it. But we did not act on their analysis. The Palestine crisis of the late 1940's simply did not touch the European nerve, as the Greek crisis did. Despite our anxieties about oil, we viewed the crisis as the result of a rather tiresome and difficult regional quarrel, on which there was much to be said on both sides. Within the government, Congressmen and officials took sides on the basis of their enthusiasms, as if the bitter war were a football game, of no consequence to the security of the United States. Americans generally admired the pioneering democratic spirit of the Israelis, and wished them well. But our concerns about the oil and geopolitics of the Middle East were translated not into effective security arrangements but into a tendency to side with the Arabs, and to avoid too open an identification with the Israelis, either in the United Nations or, later on, as arms suppliers.

United States security interests in the Middle East were and are fundamental. As would become super-obvious in the course of time, it was the area from which Europe could be outflanked and enveloped. And it possessed oil reserves we, the Europeans—and the Japanese—simply had to have in order to survive. But we undertook to safeguard those interests by weak and vacillating expedients: friendly and sympathetic talk with some of the Arab governments, but a totally inadequate program of political and diplomatic action, and no significant military bases (indeed, some years later, we abandoned the one important base we had in the area—in Libya—without a murmur). And we never seriously considered a major policy move through which we and our allies together might insist on peace, and secure the region against the dominance of hostile forces.

As for Israel, United States policy was deeply divided, and remained divided for a long, long time. Indeed, it is ambiguous and uncertain still. There was strong and general sympathy for Israel, and a realization that the international community has special obligations to protect Israel, since most of the Jews in Israel have come there, and created first the Jewish national home, and now the state of Israel, in reliance on international promises. But there was sympathy too for the Arab grievance. No responsible American officials ever accepted the Arab claim of a right to destroy Israel, but many have felt that Israel was doomed in the long run. And there was a rather passive, fearful sensitivity on the subject of oil, and a desire to avoid political friction with the Arab states, as if such a policy could minimize the risks of an ultimate showdown, either on Israel or on the use of oil as a political or military weapon. For a long time, we and the Europeans acted as if we had no alternatives.

The outcome of this inner turmoil was a curiously equivocal American position, which reduced our chances, such as they were, for achieving outcomes more compatible with our interests. It is our interest that the area be secure and at peace, available on fair terms both to our military forces and to our commerce. So far as Israel is concerned, our interest is twofold: to achieve peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors, and to maintain Israel as a bulwark whose presence and strength discourage imperial impulses on the part of Egypt, Syria, or Iraq. For a long time, as the Saudi Arabians and the Iranians understood very well, only Israel prevented Egypt under Nasser from conquering Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf states. And if we face, as we may, a showdown some day with the oil-producing states, Israel would be an indispensable ally. In addition, Israel is the only sure access point we have between Western Europe and our partners in the Far East, Australia, New Zealand, Korea, and Japan. From the security point of view, this is a fact of cardinal importance in many perspectives. Ideally, if the Middle East were at peace, Israel could be an important influence for progress throughout the area.

In the late 1940's, then, the United States failed to prevent the first Arab-Israeli war, or to influence its outcome. It carefully refrained from condemning the Arab attack on Israel as an aggression, and calling for sanctions. Instead of pressing for peace between Israel and its neighbors after the 1948 war, we accepted the armistice of 1949 as an end in iself. At that time, the Soviet Union argued for peace. We contented ourselves with a lesser goal.

By failing to insist on peace, we weakened our

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

position with the Arab states, and our ultimate security position in the region. In the absence of peace, the Arab states have been able to keep alive the hope some day of being able to destroy Israel. They knew that the United States, Britain, and France would never arm them enough for that purpose. Once they had demonstrated that the Western powers lacked the will to insist on the enforcement of the Security Council's orders to make peace, the Arab states, led by Egypt, began to explore the possibility of association with the Soviet Union for the purpose of fulfilling their great dream. What keeps the Soviet connection alive in the Middle East is not American support for Israel, but America's failure to insist upon peace between Israel and its neighbors. This basic flaw in our policy was manifest in our handling of the Middle Eastern crisis of 1948-49. It remains the basic weakness of our policy today.

I should like to put a second question about this first chapter of the story: of what significance are the rules of the charter in defining the American national interest, and the substance therefore of American foreign policy? In the late 1940's, we moved vigorously to uphold the charter in behalf of Greece, and failed to do so in behalf of Israel. Israel survived nonetheless, as a result of its heroic success in trial by battle. A few years later, we intervened against aggression in Korea, in Suez, and in Indochina. Then, after the agony and tragedy of Vietnam, there was a revulsion in American political feeling, and we did little or nothing against an accelerating tide of aggression since 1972 against Pakistan, South Vietnam, Israel, Lebanon, and many states in Africa.

The issue to be faced in our reflections about the Palestine crisis of 1946-53—and I believe it to be the ultimate issue—is the weight we should attach to the rules of the charter against aggression in the formulation and execution of our foreign policy. Forty years ago, World War II engulfed us after it had been demonstrated that the rules of the League of Nations Covenant were toothless, meaningless, and of little restraining influence on the behavior of states. For us, the same issue was posed in another form thirty years ago, when the Arab nations demonstrated that aggression against Israel was costless.

What conclusions were the Israelis and the Arabs justified in drawing from that appalling demonstration of impotence? The Russians? The rest of the world? For whom did the bells toll?

III

The Suez crisis of 1956 and 1957 was one of the most important missed opportunities of the postwar period. The policies adopted by the United States gravely weakened the Atlantic alliance, and—following the Indochina debacle of 1954—deepened and confirmed an estrangement between France and the United States which has not yet been cured. In the Middle East itself, our management of the crisis failed to bring peace between Israel and its neighbors; strengthened Nasser's position as a charismatic Arab leader; and accelerated the process of Soviet imperial penetration of the entire region, in a pattern, to recall Georges Pompidou's mordant phrase, which threatens "the soft underbelly of Europe, and constitutes a continuing Cuban missile crisis."

By the early 1950's, the Soviet effort in the Middle East had become a major affair. It was no longer an almost absentminded matter of taking advantage of every opportunity for expansion—of "pushing at open doors," as the Russians say—but something far more formidable, and ambitious.

During the immediate postwar years, the Soviets were checked in Europe by effective Western help to Greece, Turkey, and Yugoslavia, the Berlin airlift, and the formation of NATO, and the European Economic Community. Their riposte in Korea, which began in June 1950, was successfully resisted. In the age-old style of Russian diplomacy, the Soviets sought to flow around the obstacles, and resume the struggle on another front.

The Soviet strategic goal in the West was and remains the control of Europe; for the Soviets to achieve that goal would transform the balance of power irreversibly in their favor, and leave the United States isolated and vulnerable. If Western Europe should come under Soviet control, the lesson for China and Japan would be nearly compelling. The Atlantic alliance is thus necessarily the first principle of modern American security policy, as the Monroe Doctrine was a century ago.

Starting in the 1950's, the Soviets chose a Middle Eastern strategy as their principal means to the end of conquering Western Europe. By gaining a position of dominance in the Mediterranean, North Africa, and the Middle East, the Soviets thought, they could reduce Europe without even invading it. To conquer Europe, it seemed plausible to suppose, it should be sufficient to use intimidation and threats, both directly and through the exploitation of the oil weapon, as well as the weapon of left-wing politics. In October 1973, they nearly achieved their objective.

Abandoning their 1948 policy of support for Israel, the Soviets embraced Arab nationalism, and began to intervene not only in the Arab-Israeli conflict, but in the iridescent rivalries among Arab sects, states, parties, and leaders as well. For twenty-five years, as the British, French, Belgian, and now Portuguese empires of the Middle East and Africa evaporated, one after another, the Soviets have been clumping heavily into the vacuums they had often helped to create, sometimes gaining, sometimes losing, but always pressing forward in the confident pattern of a clear policy addressed to the long run.

Impelled by the traditional aspirations of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Czars, and the newer ambitions of their Communist ideology, the Soviets live still in the imperial mood of the 18th and 19th centuries, which the Western nations have rejected with relief, and with conviction.

Nasser came to power in Egypt following Egypt's defeat in 1948-49 and the military coup which ended the monarchy in 1952. A new collective leadership was exercising authority in the Soviet Union after Stalin's death in 1953. The Soviet Union became a nuclear power. The Korean war dragged on, accompanied by interminable negotiations, to be finished, finally, at the Geneva Conference of 1954.

In the Middle East, the basic military array of the early 1950's still seemed to be that of the placid prewar period. The appearance was an illusion, of course, but French and British forces were for the moment supreme in the area, backed by the American Sixth Fleet. France still controlled Morocco and Algeria, Britain guarded the Suez Canal, Aden, and a number of other key points. And there were no serious military establishments opposing the existing order. As late as 1958, Britain and the United States intervened without incident in Lebanon and Jordan, ending by their gesture a Soviet thrust for control of the region. The massive Soviet presence in the Mediterranean was for the future.

Britain, France, and the United States had issued a Tripartite Declaration in 1950, guaranteeing the political independence and territorial integrity of all the states in the area; they doled out arms to the newly independent Arab states, and to Israel, in ways which were intended to minimize the fever of ambition, and the danger of war. There were no other arms suppliers for the region until January or February 1955, when the Soviet Union finally succeeded in initiating a military-aid agreement with Egypt. The Soviet-Egyptian agreement was soon followed by comparable agreements with Syria and Iraq, and later with Algeria, the smaller states of the Arab Peninsula, and then, much later, with Libya.

THE diplomacy of the Soviet arms negotiation with Egypt in 1954 and 1955 has been discussed often, usually in terms of the mistakes John Foster Dulles is supposed to have made in rebuffing Egyptian requests for arms, and somehow mishandling the Aswan Dam negotiations. These criticisms, typical of American habits of self-reproach, miss the point. Nasser sought arms from the Soviet Union soon after the British left Suez in 1954 because he wanted to purchase military equipment on a scale which the United States, Britain, and France could not have approved. Dulles is often accused of driving the Egyptians into the embrace of the Soviets by turning down an Egyptian request for American help in building the Aswan Dam. The exact opposite is the case. The United States had to reject the Aswan Dam project in October 1955, because the Egyptians had made an arms contract with the Soviets in February, and announced it in September. Either at that time, or later, there was no conceivable way in which one could imagine Congress or the executive branch of the American government solemnly building a huge dam for Egypt, while Egypt undertook campaigns of aggression in the area as a Soviet proxy, ally, and satellite.

Nasser's political goals were incompatible with a close and cooperative relationship with the United States and Western Europe. Nasser flatly refused to join in the American plan for a Middle Eastern alliance system to supplement NATO by containing the Soviet Union from the South. He sought the military means to fulfill his aspiration to become the leader of the Arab nation, and indeed the leader of the Muslim world, by taking over Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the weak states of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula, their oil resources and their important geography, thus finally achieving Egyptian control over Iran. And, above all, he wanted to destroy Israel, and vindicate the Arab belief that the establishment of Israel was an injustice to the Arab nation, beyond the rightful authority of the League of Nations and the United Nations.

Nasser and his fellow-officers came to power in Egypt to avenge the Arab defeat in 1948-49. That yearning was the passion which nurtured all the other passions of Nasser's Egypt—the Pan-Arabism; the soaring ambition; the ambiguous relationship with the Soviets, with the Chinese, and with his fellow members of the club of the non-aligned—Nehru, Tito, Nkrumah, and Sukarno; and the long and costly campaign to conquer the Persian Gulf region via the Yemen, where he had 70,000 troops hopelessly mired in 1967.

During the early 1950's, Nasser led the Arabs in developing the strategy of refusing to negotiate with Israel, to recognize Israel, or to make peace with Israel. In 1949, the Israelis would not stop fighting until Nasser agreed not only to a cease-fire but to an armistice, and then, at a later stage, to peace. Fighting alone, without allies, and with five divisions defeated and encircled, the Egyptians finally agreed to go to Rhodes, and did sign an armistice agreement with Israel—an event which permitted Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria to enter into comparable agreements.

Then the Arabs made a remarkable discovery. The Security Council of the day had ordered the Arabs to make peace with Israel, and the General Assembly had set up a conciliation commission to facilitate the negotiation of peace. The Security Council had ruled that the armistice agreements of 1949 established a legal regime of "non-belligerency" which would last until the parties made peace. Under those agreements, the Security Council decided, the Arabs could not claim belligerent rights or bar the Suez Canal to Israeli ships or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shipping. What the Arabs realized in the early 1950's was that they could defy mandatory decisions of the Security Council without penalty. They were told in 1951 that they could not shut the Suez Canal to the Israelis. But they did, and nothing happened. They were told they had to make peace with Israel. They refused to do so, insisted that they were still at war with Israel, and had "belligerent rights"; again, the Security Council did nothing to enforce its rulings.

True, the Israelis treated the territory they held under the armistice agreements as their own; gradually even the Arabs came to regard the armistice demarcation lines of 1949 as true boundaries between the Arab and the Jewish parts of Palestine—that is, between Israel and Jordan—although the armistice agreements provide otherwise. But the Western powers showed no appetite for the task of requiring the Arab nations to make peace with Israel. As a result, the deep-seated Arab conviction that the existence of Israel is an aggression against Arab rights became a political force.

By 1951 or 1952, the Soviets began to understand that this conviction among the Arabs was a weapon they could use in their campaign to bring Europe under their control, and to split Europe from North America. No Arab statesman, however moderate, can dissociate himself from the call to a Holy War, a *jihad,* against Israel. With massive arms supplies, political backing, and the deterrent threat of some Soviet military protection as well, the Soviets dangled before the eyes of the Arabs the irresistible temptation of an opportunity to drive out the Israelis, as the Crusaders had been driven out many centuries before. Beating the anti-Israeli drum, and organizing diplomatic and economic boycotts, guerrilla attacks, and occasional wars against Israel have aroused radical forces within Arab politics, and forced one regime after another to follow the example of Syria, Iraq, and Libya. Under the pressure of escalating hostility, the Arab states are drawn into acts of aggression not only against Israel, but against the Western states as well—for example, the nationalization of foreign concessions, the punitive increase in the price of oil, and the oil embargoes of 1956, 1967, and 1973. With every step down this path, Arab dependence on the Soviet Union is deepened and confirmed.

THE immediate background of the Suez crisis of 1956 was a series of developments which brought Britain, France, and Israel together as primary victims of Nasser's policies of expansion, backed by Soviet arms and diplomatic support. The Egyptians refused a French request that they desist from assisting the rebellion in Algeria, a matter of convulsive importance to the public life of France at the time. The nationalization of the Suez Canal, following the withdrawal of British forces from Egypt in 1954, and climaxing a long series of pinpricks and more, was regarded by Britain and France as a breach of treaty obligations with them, and an act threatening the vital interests of both nations. And Nasser had closed the Straits of Tiran as well as the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping, a policy which Israel rightly viewed as a partial blockade, and an act of war. Under customary international law, codified in Article 51 of the United Nations charter, the proportional use of force is justified by way of self-defense to cure such violations of international law by one state against another, when diplomatic or judicial remedies are unavailable or impractical.

Britain and France felt pushed beyond endurance by the pressures—and the tone—of Egyptian policy. For them, Egypt's behavior would surely mean the end of any possibility of effective action on their part to protect their interests throughout the region, if the political condition of the area should deteriorate further. For Israel, Egypt's Soviet connection, and the arms build-up and intensification of pressures to which it gave rise, presented a palpable threat. It should be recalled that the Soviet-Egyptian arms agreement of 1955 was on a formidable scale. Soviet arms shipments to Egypt exceeded in volume the cumulative total of arms transfers to all the Middle Eastern countries (save Iraq) by all other arms suppliers during the previous five years. The Soviet-Egyptian connection completely changed the horizon of Middle Eastern politics. It was not an event Israel could be expected to ignore.

As Nasser's policy developed, he allowed guerrillas to operate against Israel from Egyptian territory. Israel responded with unmistakable emphasis. In this context, the closing of the Straits of Tiran was taken to be the final straw in a cumulative process which would end in full-scale attack unless it was promptly scotched.

Britain, France, and Israel then made common cause, and decided to use force together to remedy their several and quite different grievances. Earlier, indeed, Ben-Gurion had publicly welcomed Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal, provided that Egypt would recognize Israel's right to use it. Although some American officials have claimed otherwise, the United States government was consulted and informed about the Anglo-French decision to use force, certainly by the British, and perhaps by the French as well. We pressed a series of meetings and negotiations to establish an association of the nations whose shipping used the Canal as the agency to operate it—a device which served to delay the crisis, and, it was hoped, to smother it in diplomacy. It did not, of course, succeed.

On October 29, 1956, a few days before the American election, and shortly after the Soviet invasion of Hungary, Israel attacked Egypt in the Sinai, seeking to liquidate guerrilla bases in the area, and to open the Straits of Tiran. The next day, Britain and France asked Israel and Egypt to keep their forces away from the Canal, threatening

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

military action if they did not agree. On October 31, British and French forces attacked Egypt in the Canal Zone, explaining that their purpose was to separate the Israelis and the Egyptians, to achieve international administration of the Canal, and to prevent a major war. Their real goal, of course, was the overthrow of Nasser, and the emergence of a more cooperative regime in Egypt.

The Israeli attack in the desert—with French support through air patrols over Israeli cities—was a brilliant success. The British and the French moved deliberately to occupy the Canal Zone and its chief cities.

The United States, which had warned Israel not to use force in most insistent and even threatening terms, now took the position that the Anglo-French-Israeli attack was not a justifiable use of force in self-defense, but a breach of the charter. Both President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles were angry, or in any event acted as if they were angry.* The United States moved for a cease-fire in the Security Council with startling speed and energy, and spoke ominously of its obligations under the Tripartite Declaration of 1950 to assist any victim of aggression in the Middle East.

The result, in the field, in the Security Council, and in the political life of the Atlantic alliance, was a disastrous and unnecessary setback for American interests. I say "unnecessary," although I myself fully accept and would still support the policy of President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles in basing our policy on the foundation of the United Nations charter, and its obligation to avoid the unilateral use of force in international affairs, except in cases of self-defense against breaches of international law for which no peaceful remedy is in fact available. Although the United States government was officially informed, at least in July 1956, that the British government had decided to use force under Article 51, we took no steps as allies to consult Britain or France about the problem, and to formulate with them a policy which could genuinely protect the common interest of the allies in the controversy. We did pursue the dilatory and ephemeral scheme of a users' association, which Egypt might be persuaded to accept in lieu of Egyptian administration of the Canal. Our position as mediators and neutrals in that negotiation guaranteed an outcome which could not protect our common interests, or give Britain and France satisfaction. We did not support the legal position of Britain and France, in claiming that Egypt's nationalization of the Canal was so drastic a breach of existing treaties as to amount to a use of force in violation of Article 2 (4) of the charter. And we brushed aside the far stronger and less debatable legal position of Israel, which claimed—quite correctly, in my opinion—a right to use limited and proportional force in self-defense both against guerrilla raids from Egyptian territory, and against the use of force to close the Straits of Tiran and the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping. In settling the Suez crisis of 1956, the international community—led by the United States and the Soviet Union—ultimately rejected the legal position of Britain and France, but upheld the basic claims of the Israelis, and sought to provide assurances to Israel with regard to all its claims against Egypt.

But we took no such positions in the United Nations, or in the early diplomatic stages of the crisis. We took a flat and simplistic stand with regard to the illegality of what Britain, France, and Israel had done, and used strong economic and political pressure to force them to accept a cease-fire, and then a withdrawal without prior conditions.

With regard to Israel, the scenario did not follow that formula. Groups within the United States government, led by Lyndon B. Johnson as majority leader of the Senate, induced the executive branch to adopt a different approach. Before Israel withdrew its forces to the armistice demarcation lines, the United States, acting as go-between, obtained for Israel a number of assurances which were transmitted to Israel by the United States in behalf of Egypt: that Israel's maritime rights through the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran would be respected; that Egypt would meet its international responsibilities to prevent guerrilla attacks on Israel from Egyptian territory; and that peace would be made in due course. It was explicitly understood that if force were used to close the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, Israel would be entitled to use force in reply by way of self-defense under Article 51. Great Britain, France, and the United States guaranteed the international character of the Straits of Tiran. And it was agreed as well that if Egypt should ever unilaterally request the removal of UNEF forces from the Sinai, the Secretary-General would undertake negotiations, in accordance with a memorandum duly filed, to prevent that eventuality.

In deference to Egypt's political sensibilities, the international understanding of 1957 was embodied in an agreed series of statements, letters, memoranda, and silences, both in the General Assembly, at United Nations headquarters, and in the several capitals.

The breach by Egypt of every term of this agreement between 1957 and 1967 had a decisive influence on the substance and structure of Security Council Resolution 242, which embodied the international settlement formally ending the Six-Day War of 1967.

The best comment I know on our diplomacy during and after the Suez crisis of 1956 was made by Dean Acheson in a private conversation with

* Both Harold Macmillan and Selwyn Lloyd, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Great Britain after the Suez affair, have told me privately that when they met with President Eisenhower in Bermuda in 1957, the President's first question was, "Why didn't you go through with it?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me some years later. There is a principle in all systems of law, he remarked, which prescribes that he who seeks equity should do equity. Egypt sought the protection of the charter against the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of 1956. Our posture should have been that we would support Egypt, insofar as the law justified its claims, only if it made peace with Israel, in accordance with the mandates of the Security Council, and fully complied with the precepts of international law governing the Suez Canal.

Acheson's view of the matter became the premise on which we built Resolution 242 after the 1967 war. When Nasser had violated every provision of the 1957 agreement, finally even closing the Straits of Tiran in May 1967, the United States and its Atlantic allies, and many other nations throughout the world, were ready to accept Acheson's approach to the problem.

IV

By 1967, of course, the magnetic field of world politics had become entirely different from its configuration in 1956. The influence of the Soviet Union in world affairs was growing steadily, while Europe continued to withdraw from world politics, becoming a regional political and military power. While China and the Soviet Union had drawn apart, China had not yet moved to establish with the United States a relationship which might deter Soviet aggression. That immense and constructive shift took place in 1971 and 1972. The Soviet Union was a massive nuclear power, and a major sea power, pressing its influence skillfully and steadily in many areas of the world, despite what was widely, but erroneously, perceived as a major setback during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. With explosive consequences for its own political life, France had withdrawn from Algeria, and from Morocco, Madagascar, and several other imperial positions as well. The United States was deeply involved in South Vietnam. With full and active Soviet support, Egypt was pursuing a large-scale war in the Yemen, seeking control of Aden, and of the states and resources of the Persian Gulf. Syria and Iraq had endured coup after coup, which had resulted in a reorientation of the policies of those countries, and drawn them into the Soviet orbit. While the Congo had been preserved by international support in 1964, its future was in doubt. Comparable processes of change were visible throughout the world, endlessly raising questions about the politico-military and the economic position of the United States and its allies in the Atlantic and in the Pacific.

Most important of all, the unnatural division among the Atlantic allies which the United States had allowed to develop over the Suez crisis of 1956 had continued, and become nearly the normal pattern of their political policies for questions arising outside Europe itself.

When I came back to the State Department in the fall of 1966, the Middle East phase of the general problem was clearly getting worse. The Soviets were increasing their pressure in that sector. The process of Soviet penetration was well advanced in Algeria, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Southern Arabia, and the nearby African areas. As the crisis of 1967 approached, Egypt was deeply engaged in a large-scale war to conquer Yemen and Southern Arabia. In that campaign, Egypt had full Soviet support, including poison gas, and some Soviet military participation as well. Through the Yemen, Egypt and the Soviet Union sought control of Aden, and of the states and resources of the Persian Gulf. The Yemen strategy was necessary since it had proved to be so difficult in the past to destroy Israel. Success for Egypt in its drive toward the Persian Gulf, Nasser thought, would surely doom Israel as well.

Naturally, the Soviet-Egyptian war in the Yemen caused alarm in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, the Gulf states, and Israel.

For more than a year before the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel had been subjected to an intensified program of more and more sophisticated guerrilla raids. The raids were organized and directed from Syria, but were often mounted from Jordan. Inevitably, these raids led to reprisals against which the Arabs protested vehemently, as if the reprisals were in any sense illegal or unjustified. Just as inevitably, the Arab protests gained political, or at least nominal, support, at the United Nations and elsewhere, in a pattern which had been developing since the failure of the Lausanne effort to achieve peace in the early 1950s. The United States and other countries tended to deplore whatever looked like an escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, although they had been unwilling since 1949 to take effective steps to enforce the decisions of the Security Council which had commanded the Arab states to make peace with Israel. It was easier to reproach Israel for its use of force in self-defense under Article 51 of the charter than to make the Arabs stop their guerrilla raids, boycotts, or other acts of force in violation of the armistice agreements of 1949, and in violation of the United Nations charter.

After one of the most inflamed of these episodes, in the fall of 1966, we persuaded Israel to go to the Security Council for redress instead of mounting a reprisal against Syria. In the negotiations for a resolution, the Soviet Union assured us its support, in return for modifications of the text which watered it down nearly to innocuousness. Then the Soviet representative vetoed the resolution. A year later, looking back on the chain of events which led to the Six-Day War, Avraham Harman, the Israeli ambassador to the United States at the time, wondered if the war could have been prevented if Israel had ignored our advice, and hit Syria hard at that early stage. It is a painful question, well worth thinking about.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IN 1966, United States policy was based on a fresh appraisal of Soviet penetration of the Middle East, the Mediterranean basin, and the Northern part of Africa itself. For the first time, it rested on a realistic appreciation of Soviet exploitation of Arab resistance to the existence of Israel as a weapon of Soviet imperialism.

The first goal of our diplomacy was to prevent the war—to protect our interests, of course, but also to head off the imminent danger of war. In this extremely active and far-reaching campaign, which dominated our efforts in the winter and spring of 1967, we established a consensus among our allies and many other nations, and laid the foundation for the alliance diplomacy which eventually achieved Security Council Resolution 242 in November 1967. For the first, and thus far the last, time since the disaster of Suez in 1956-57, we had a concerted alliance position on Middle Eastern policy, save only for the French, who were nonetheless systematically consulted. The United States worked intimately and effectively with the British government throughout this period, led on these matters by George Brown, George Thomson, Sir Patrick Dean, and Lord Caradon. Frequent consultations with the other Atlantic allies took place in Brussels, in Washington, in London, in Paris, and in other capitals. There were continuing consultations as well with Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, and especially with Iran, as well as with the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, India, and Pakistan. Among the Atlantic allies, the positions of Turkey, Canada, Italy, Denmark, Belgium, and the Netherlands were particularly important.

The Soviet Union precipitated the crisis of May 1967, not only by supporting Nasser but by spreading false and inflammatory information as well—particularly the false reports that Israel had mobilized in order to attack Syria by way of reprisal for guerrilla raids from Syrian territory. These reports continued even after we had warned the Soviet Union on the subject.

Despite strenuous allied efforts to defuse the crisis, the war exploded early in June 1967, as a result, I am convinced, not of accident but of Soviet and Egyptian miscalculations about how the pattern of events would unfold. They thought that the open threat of war would lead the United States, deeply engaged in Vietnam, to force Israel to accept a humiliating political defeat, by allowing Egypt to close the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, and to obtain other concessions.

A critical element in the drama was the timetable for carrying out a plan to have the allies escort shipping through the Straits of Tiran under Egyptian guns at Sharm el-Sheikh. The British had proposed the plan. The Israelis had delayed their decision until its feasibility could be explored. The United States, the Netherlands, Canada, Australia, and other nations accepted the idea.

As I pointed out earlier, the international character of the Straits of Tiran was one of the key elements of the secret agreement between Egypt and Israel we had negotiated in 1957. When Nasser broke that agreement by closing the Straits in May 1967, one of our chief officials commented that "he cut our throat from ear to ear." In 1957, the United States, the British, and the French assured Israel that they would guarantee the freedom of international navigation through that waterway.

Although the United States could have participated in the British naval-escort program on the authority of the President alone, especially in view of the provisions of the Eisenhower Doctrine Resolution passed by Congress in 1957, and reaffirmed in 1961, it was decided to seek a fresh congressional resolution, because of the political storms in the United States over Vietnam.

President Johnson had reason to believe he had a few more days to obtain that resolution, but events took over. Arab mobilization under unified command on all of Israel's borders, save that with Lebanon, became a far more imminent and ominous threat and act of force than the closing of the Straits of Tiran. The war exploded.

The key to American and allied policy toward the crisis was stated by President Johnson on the first day of the war. This time, he said, our goal would be peace, not a cease-fire alone, or a renewal of the armistice agreements of 1949, but peace itself, the condition which the Security Council had demanded on several occasions, but never carried through. The United States and its allies pressed vigorously for a cease-fire from the first day of the war. Until the course of the fighting became clear to the Soviet Union and the Arabs in the middle of the week, they refused to consider a cease-fire or any other cessation of hostilities.

During and after the Six-Day War the United States and Great Britain, acting in concert, led an intensive and far-ranging diplomatic effort to bring about a state of genuine peace in the area. That campaign culminated in the unanimous adoption by the Security Council of Resolution 242 in November 1967. The history of that diplomatic campaign gives the text of the resolution an extremely plain meaning. Since Resolution 242 was made mandatory by Resolution 338 in October 1973, and necessarily remains the basis for all peace-making efforts in the next phase of the conflict, at Geneva or elsewhere, its history is worth reviewing in some detail.

A number of positions emerged. Their interplay, and the resolution of that interplay, are reflected in the document.

The Soviet Union and its chief Arab associates wished to have Israel declared the aggressor and required under Chapter VII of the charter—that is, under threat of sanctions—to withdraw to the armistice-demarcation lines as they stood on June 5, in exchange for the fewest possible assurances as to what would happen after Israel withdrew; that after withdrawal, Israeli maritime rights in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Straits of Tiran would be "no problem" (sometimes the same thought was expressed about the Suez Canal as well); and that after Israeli withdrawal, the possibility could be discussed of a document that might be filed with the Secretary General, of a Security Council resolution, that would finally end any possibility of claiming that a "state of belligerency" existed between Israel and its neighbors. This position was asserted without regard to the fact that the Security Council had twice explicitly denied that any state could claim "belligerent" status or "belligerent" rights in the Middle Eastern conflict. That particular issue is simply not available for bargaining.

The Israeli position had four major elements. In the Israeli view the Arab governments had repudiated the armistice agreements of 1949 by repeated acts of war over the years. They believed that the parties should meet alone and draw up a treaty of peace. So far as territorial problems were concerned, they contended that negotiations should begin, not with the armistice demarcation lines, but with the 1967 cease-fire lines. Until negotiations actually began, Israel should not weaken its bargaining position by publicly revealing its peace aims, although the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister did state publicly and officially that Israel had no territorial claims as such, but was interested in the territorial problem only insofar as issues of security and maritime rights, and, of course, the problem of Jerusalem were concerned. Meanwhile Israel began its administration of Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, and Sinai as the occupying power under the cease-fire resolutions, justifying its policies "at the municipal level," and without annexations, in the perspective of that branch of international law.

The United States and the formidable diplomatic coalition which it then led supported a third approach, which ultimately prevailed.

In view of the taut circumstances of May 1967, no majority could be obtained, either in the Security Council or the General Assembly, to declare Israel the aggressor. The question of who fired the first shot, difficult enough to resolve in itself, had to be examined as part of a sequence of Byzantine complexity: the false reports of Israeli mobilization against Syria; the removal of UNEF forces from the Sinai and the Gaza Strip: the closing of the Straits of Tiran; the mobilization of Arab forces around Israel, and the establishment of a unified command; the call for a Holy War; and the cycle of statements, propaganda, speeches, and diplomatic efforts that marked the final weeks before June 5. Before that mystery, sober opinion refused to reach the conclusion that Israel was the aggressor. In view of the political orientation of the UN, no serious attempt was made to obtain a resolution declaring the United Arab Republic to be the aggressor.

Second, the majority opinion both in the General Assembly and in the Security Council supported the American view, first announced on June 5, 1967, and stated more fully on June 19, 1967, that after twenty bitter and tragic years of "war," "belligerency," and guerrilla activity in the Middle East, the quarrel had become a burden to world peace, and that the world community should finally insist on the establishment of a condition of peace, flowing from an agreement among the parties.

Third, the experience of the international community with the understandings that ended the Suez crisis of 1956-57 led to the conclusion that Israel should not be required to withdraw from the cease-fire lines, except as part of a firm prior agreement dealing with all the major issues in the controversy: justice for the refugees; security arrangements, including demilitarized zones, for Israel's borders and for its maritime rights in the Gulf of Aqaba, the Suez Canal, and the other international waterways of the region; a solution for Jerusalem that met the legitimate interests of Jordan and of Israel and of the three world religions that regard Jerusalem as a Holy City; and the establishment of a condition of peace.

Fourth, while the majority approach always linked Israeli withdrawal to the establishment of a condition of peace through an agreement among the parties, the question remained, "To what boundaries should Israel withdraw?" On this issue the American position was sharply drawn, and rested on a critical provision of the armistice agreements of 1949 with Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. Those agreements provided that each demarcation line "is not to be construed in any sense as a political or territorial boundary, and is delineated without prejudice to rights, claims, or positions of either party to the armistice as regards ultimate settlement of the Palestine question." The wording of the armistice agreement with Lebanon is slightly different, although its tenor is the same. Many other provisions of each agreement make it clear that the purpose of the armistice was "to facilitate the transition from the present truce to permanent peace in Palestine," and that all non-military "rights, claims, or interests" were subject to later settlement as part of the transition from armistice to peace. These paragraphs, which were put into the agreements at Arab insistence, were the legal foundation for the controversies over the wording of paragraphs 1 and 3 of Security Council Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967.

That resolution, promulgated under Chapter VI of the charter—that is to say, as a call for an agreement of peace—finally received the unanimous support of the Council. It was backed in advance by the assurance of the key countries that they would accept the resolution and work with Ambassador Gunnar Jarring to implement it.

It is important to recall what the resolution requires. It calls upon the parties to reach "a peace-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ful and accepted" agreement that would definitively settle the Arab-Israeli controversy and establish conditions of "just and lasting peace" in the area, in accordance with the "provisions and principles" stated in the resolution. The agreement required by paragraph 3 of the resolution, the Security Council said, should establish "secure and recognized boundaries" between Israel and its neighbors, "free from threats or acts of force," to replace the armistice demarcation lines established in 1949 and the cease-fire lines of June 1967. The Israeli armed forces should withdraw to such lines as part of a comprehensive agreement settling all the issues mentioned in the resolution, and in a condition of peace.

Between 1967 and the end of the Johnson administration, endless efforts were made, through Ambassador Jarring and otherwise, to implement the resolution through direct or indirect negotiations. In that period, Egypt rejected every proposal for a negotiating procedure that might permit the parties to carry out the resolution, including at least one proposal, that of the fall of 1968, in which the United States offered to support the terms Egypt had publicly announced as its terms for peace, the return of the whole of the Sinai in accordance with an agreed timetable. The other Arab states were unwilling to act while Egypt refused to make peace.

The Nixon administration remained nominally committed to the framework of Resolution 242, but experimented with a variety of alternative negotiating approaches which met the same fate. And it did nothing in 1969-70 when Nasser, with full Soviet backing, undertook a "war of attrition" along the Suez Canal against Israeli occupying forces in that area. In 1971, Ambassador Jarring attempted to obtain agreement among the parties on the basis of an Israeli withdrawal from *all* the territories it had occupied in 1967. Ambassador Jarring's position was without foundation in Resolution 242. By going beyond his mandate, he lost his capacity to act as an intermediary, and his mission ended in failure.

In this period, China sought and obtained a rapprochement with the United States, as an answer to the menace it perceived in the Soviet military build-up in Siberia, and the increase of Soviet influence in Southern and Southeastern Asia. This event transformed the theater of world politics, and altered the significance of each of its problems.

In April 1972, according to President Sadat, the Soviets promised him to support an attempt to change the situation in the Middle East by war during 1973. Elaborate preparations for the war of October 1973 were then set in train, with full Soviet participation, behind a brilliantly executed program of deception and surprise. President Sadat has testified that the Soviet promise was given him a month *before* the Soviets publicly promised President Nixon to cooperate with us not only in the policy of "détente," but specifically in a diplomatic effort to support Jarring's attempt to bring about peace in the Middle East pursuant to Resolution 242.

THE war of October 1973, then, can be understood only as a major Soviet move, undertaken at a time of American weakness, to separate America from Western Europe, and transform the balance of power fundamentally against us. It was the Soviet answer to China's rapprochement with the United States—a war addressed to strategic and not simply to tactical goals. The Soviet policy almost succeeded in 1973—and may succeed yet.

By 1973, the concerted policy toward the Middle East conducted by the Atlantic allies, except for France, between 1966 and 1969 had been allowed to fade away. American consultations on Middle Eastern problems with its Atlantic allies and other interested nations simply did not occur. The Europeans, absorbed in trying to find a separate political role for the European Community, took a position on these matters markedly different from that of the United States, and sought at least the illusion of keeping the United States at arm's length. As a result, the United States was politically isolated when the war of October 1973 broke out, and had to deal with the crisis alone.

In the event, of course, the Soviet plan failed. The Israelis won a remarkable military victory, with the support of American arms. And the United States rightly refused to consider a cease-fire until the Soviets and the Arabs agreed to the mandatory provision of Resolution 338, adopted on October 22, 1973, which "decides that, immediately and concurrently with the cease-fire, negotiations shall start between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace," in accordance with the principles and provisions of Resolution 242. On paper, this commitment is the most important American diplomatic victory in the whole history of the dispute over Israel's right to exist, and the key to possible success in a diplomatic program designed to protect American and allied interests in the area. While an Arab-Israeli peace will not of itself assure the protection of those interests, that goal cannot be achieved until peace between Israel and its neighbors has become a political and juridical reality.

The basic weakness of American diplomacy since 1973 has been its failure to stand firmly on this principle, which embodies the most important lesson of the long, tragic, and bitter history of the region, and of world politics as a whole, since the late 1940's. There are secondary weaknesses as well—defects of diplomatic method, and of political insight. We have not attempted to obtain the support of our allies for a concerted policy which might have more weight in the scales of world politics than a purely American policy. We have involved the prestige of the Secretary of State in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

negotiations which might better have been left to ambassadors or special envoys. But the controlling weakness of the policy has not been procedural, but substantive. The step-by-step diplomacy we have pursued has involved American pressure to force Israel to withdraw *without* peace, in the pattern of John Foster Dulles's disastrous diplomacy of 1957, contrary to the command of the Security Council resolutions we ourselves obtained.

Furthermore, we have not even been at pains to see to it that the military disengagement agreements we did negotiate were compatible with our ultimate goal of peace. We have not insisted, for example, on the demilitarization of the areas in the Sinai and the Golan Heights which Israel has yielded to Egypt and to Syria, although no general Israeli withdrawals can possibly be expected—or sought—without complete demilitarization. For this reason, the agreements thus far made do not really provide for "military disengagement." And they would make peace negotiations infinitely more difficult, if such negotiations should ever begin, since Egypt and Syria will be most reluctant to withdraw from the territories to which they have been allowed to return.

The first American national interest in the prolonged conflict over Israel's right to exist is the achievement of peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors—a just and durable peace, an even-handed peace if you will, but an agreement of peace, negotiated by the states of the region, and freely accepted by them as fair. At this stage of the controversy, the Security Council has ruled, that goal requires peace itself—not another truce or cease-fire; not a repetition of the procedure we followed in 1957; not a reiteration of the terms of the 1949 armistice agreements, which established a regime of non-belligerency of indefinite duration; but peace. We should settle for nothing less. By postponing peace, and demonstrating that we can force Israel to withdraw without peace, as we did in 1957, and again in 1975, we do not weaken but fortify and perpetuate the Arab ties to the Soviet Union.

There is no escape from history or geography. The Middle East is quite as important to the security of Europe as it was in the time of Hannibal, Augustus, and Napoleon—more important, because of the importance of oil, of air power, and of space and other communications systems. Whatever the merits of the Balfour Declaration as an abstract problem of ethics—wise men will debate that question to the end of time—history has ratified the legitimate existence of Israel through a long series of authoritative decisions of the world community. And a strong, confident Israel is a vital factor in any program to protect our own legitimate national interests, and those of Europe, Japan, and many other countries, in the independence, openness, and stability of the region. These facts we can only refuse to respect at our peril. It is unthinkable that the international community could stand idly by, in the atmosphere of Dürrenmatt's terrible vision in *The Visit*, if Israel were in danger of destruction. The moral and political convulsion which such an event would engender is beyond calculation. It could spell the end not only of the Atlantic alliance, but of liberal civilization as we know it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rediscovering Mencken

Joseph Epstein

I wondered where Cohn got that incapacity to enjoy Paris. Possibly from Mencken. Mencken hates Paris, I believe. So many young men got their likes and dislikes from Mencken.

—*The Sun Also Rises*

The Sun Also Rises was published in 1926, and thus this passage came to be written at a time when H. L. Mencken, two years into his ten-year stint (1924-34) of editing the *American Mercury*, was at the zenith of his fame. People with intellectual interests of an age to remember the *American Mercury* recall even today the special excitement with which they awaited each new monthly issue. Writers who felt spiritually at odds with what they took to be the reigning values of the day bowed down to the magazine, manuscripts in hand, as the Mecca from which their own true values were most stentoriously cried. Agnostic in spirit, catholic in interest, and urbane in outlook, the *American Mercury* never presented its readers any problem in discovering precisely where it stood. It was against the genteel tradition in literature; it was against Prohibition and puritanism generally in social life; it was against the banal pretensions of organized religion, of politicians, and of businessmen. As Hilton Kramer has neatly put it, during the 1920's H. L. Mencken "served his readers as a sort of intellectual counterpart to the neighborhood bootlegger."

While every magazine is in some sense an extension of its editor's personality, the impress of H. L. Mencken on the pages of the *American Mercury* was not merely clear but complete. At the height of its popularity the magazine's circulation never rose above 60,000, but the number of its subscribers belied its influence. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the number of the *American Mercury*'s subscribers belied H. L. Mencken's influence, for, though he dominated the magazine, it was only one of several of his activities. During his years as editor of the *American Mercury*, Mencken turned out his own books (some years as many as three of them), wrote a regular weekly column for the Baltimore *Evening Sun*, kept up a fairly vigorous social round in Baltimore, Washington, and New York, and maintained a personal and professional correspondence (usually answering letters on the same day that he received them) that his biographer estimates at roughly 100,000 letters.

As may be imagined, H. L. Mencken was exceedingly well organized, but more than organization was involved. Ornate and melodious though his prose was, he seldom required a second draft of anything he wrote. Philip M. Wagner, a colleague of Mencken's on the *Sun* papers, has said: "Mencken thought in prose, and spoke in prose. The transfer onto paper was easy for him, and must have been from the beginning." He also had the gift of innate energy—energy furious, inexhaustible, inexorably buoyant. Walter Lippmann connected Mencken's energy directly to his influence: "When you can explain the heightening effect of a spirited horse, of a swift athlete, of a dancer really in control of his own body, when you can explain why watching them you feel more alive yourself, you can explain the quality of [Mencken's] influence."

That he wrote so entertainingly did nothing to retard his influence. If the aim of poetry is to instruct and delight, Mencken would have claimed as much for the kind of intellectual journalism he practiced. He held that the first order of a book review was to be entertaining. "In journalism," he wrote, "it seems to me, it is far better to be wrong that to be timorous." In the more than six hundred pages of *The New Mencken Letters** few are the letters that do not have some inventive phrase, play of high spirits, or touch of charm in them. ("All the usual hypocrisies" is the ending salutation to one.) To a lady friend he wrote: "My motto is that of Swift: 'the chief end I propose to myself in all my labors is to vex the world rather than divert it.'" But the truth was that he was able to vex the world at all only because he had first been able to divert it.

So successfully did he divert the world that his fame during his lifetime rivaled that of the three foremost celebrity-writers in our national literary history: Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, and

JOSEPH EPSTEIN is the editor of the *American Scholar*. His previous contributions to COMMENTARY include "Professing English" (August 1976) and "The Riddle of Dos Passos" (January 1976).

* Edited by Carl Bode, Dial, 635 pp., $19.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Norman Mailer. But where they are chiefly novelists, he was a critic, who himself once described criticism as "no more than prejudice made plausible." Although not so blatant in his pursuit of fame as Twain, Hemingway, or Mailer, neither was Mencken oblivious to its allure. In his biography, *Mencken*,* Carl Bode informs us that as early as 1903, at the age of twenty-three, H. L. Mencken subscribed to a clipping service. When the *American Mercury* was censored in Boston in what became known as the Hatrack case—after the title of a short story about a prostitute that ran in its pages—photographers and reporters, by prearrangement, waited at Brimstone Corner of the Boston Common as Mencken sold a copy of the banned magazine to the secretary of the Watch and Ward Society; an act that, because of the publicity, resulted in his brief arrest and lengthy enshrinement as a champion of free speech. After Mencken had written something controversial—which might, in his early and middle years, include almost everything he wrote—he made certain that copies were sent out to newspaper editors in different sections of the country. Hot copy always, he was often referred to in the press as the Baltimore Bad Boy. Even rumors of his marrying—leaving, as he termed it, "the celibate aristocracy"—made many papers; the actual event, in 1930 at the age of fifty, made them all.

H. L. Mencken thrived in a world which, despite the appearance of a brief revival under the Kennedys, no longer exists today in anything like its old form: a world in which serious literature, show business, and journalism did not seem far distant from one another. Thus, F. Scott Fitzgerald, near the end of his life, could write to his daughter: "Sometimes I wish I had gone along with [Cole Porter and Rodgers and Hart and the rest], but I guess I am too much a moralist at heart, and really want to preach at people in some acceptable form, rather than entertain." Mencken himself seems not to have drawn so firm a line between preaching and entertaining; nor, for that matter, between intellectual work and show business. In his day-to-day life the two merged easily enough. George Jean Nathan, his co-editor on the *Smart Set*, however sophisticated he may have been, was essentially a Broadway figure. Several of Mencken's letters in the new collection are to the actresses Lillian Gish and Aileen Pringle. Most distinctly an uptown figure, Mencken found nothing in Greenwich Village or in the bohemian life generally that held appeal. Although he was far and away the most important literary influence of his time—Edmund Wilson, going further, wrote that he was "without question, since Poe, our greatest practicing literary journalist"—there was little that was consciously "literary" about Mencken or about the way he lived.

Was H. L. Mencken a man whose time had come and is now irretrievably gone—a man for a single season? Is he, like the *boobus Americanus* of his invention ("the moral Americano—the 100 per-cent Methodist, Odd Fellow, Ku Kluxer, and Know-Nothing"), himself finally no more than a period piece? Why, despite the light flurry of publication about him in recent years, have we ceased to regard Mencken as a figure of any true significance, except to his own time? The current wisdom on Mencken holds that of all his works only *The American Language* and its *Supplements* and his three autobiographical volumes (*Happy Days, Newspaper Days,* and *Heathen Days*) retain any interest.

Edmund Wilson, writing in 1950, entered a demurral to this opinion, but an odd one. In a *New Yorker* piece Wilson cited Mencken's courageous achievements against censors, Tennessee fundamentalists, and others, and remarked that it was astonishing that "one independent critic, writing mainly in newspapers and magazines, should have fought so many successful fights and grown to be so powerful a figure." But earlier in this essay, scoffing at the "line" on Mencken, Wilson noted that his "miscellaneous writings, too, hold up well—not as doctrine (Mencken as a thinker is brash, inconsistent, and crude) but for a personal rhythm and color that have their dignity as well as their humor. Mencken can be brutal, obtuse; he almost always oversimplifies; but these articles and essays and squibs are none the less literature." What is being said here is that H. L. Mencken once had enormous influence, was involved in some good causes, and wrote, if one is prepared to disregard his ideas, some splendid prose. This is very selective criticism, in which Edmund Wilson finds in H. L. Mencken those things he finds attractive or agreeable to him, and lets drop away all that is neither. Although generous in impulse, Wilson on Mencken reads like an instance of Mencken on criticism—"no more than prejudice made plausible."

Mencken produced an enormous body of work: several collections of essays, small books on Shaw and Nietzsche, political journalism, literary criticism, autobiographies, works on general subjects (among them *Notes on Democracy, Treatise on the Gods, Treatise on Right and Wrong,* and *In Defense of Women*), a book of writings on music, a dictionary of quotations, the three volumes of *The American Language*, and much fugitive journalism besides. Although the quality varies widely, the range is impressive, and the spirit is generally of a piece. Mencken's ideas, his vision, his tone, his style, his battles, each is a strand woven inextricably into the fabric of his work. Mencken was a writer who was fully formed young and changed scarcely at all over his active career. The influence of Nietzsche and Shaw combined in him. "As for Nietzsche," he wrote, "I think his value lies in the fact that he is never quite sane, but always wildly extravagant. The truth always lies between: neither party is ever right." Shaw he

* Southern Illinois University Press, 452 pp., $10.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

called "the Ulster Polonius." Mencken was something of a Social Darwinist into the bargain, and a devoted reader of the social scientist William Graham Sumner. One could cite other influences, but the chief point is that Mencken, from his earliest maturity, distrusted efforts of uplift and reform, advocated personal liberty, and staunchly adhered to the comic perspective. He sorely felt the absence in America of what he termed a "civilized aristocracy," which would be "secure in its position, animated by an intelligent curiosity, skeptical of all facile generalizations, superior to the sentimentality of the mob, and delighting in the battle of ideas for its own sake." Like Nietzsche, he could be wildly extravagant; but unlike Nietzsche, he was always sane. Like Shaw, Mencken made a living out of a detestation of hypocrisy; but unlike Shaw, he was without the pretensions of the pundit.

He was also a man whose life was not reducible to his ideas. Although he gave the American language the term "booboisie," Mencken was himself as thoroughgoing a bourgeois as can be imagined; and not a high-bred bourgeois either, but one of the rather more common variety. Till the age of fifty Mencken lived at home with his mother, leaving only for the five-year span of his marriage, then returning there to live out his days with his brother August. He was one of the boys, meeting for decades with old friends in a group calling itself the Saturday Night Club, which played classical music—Mencken banging away at the piano—and drank beer. While he advocated personal freedom for others, he appears not to have gone far beyond the bounds of advocacy in his own life. His wife, whom he married knowing she had but a few years to live, once said: "Henry is Victorian, though he won't admit it."

If the bourgeois habits were Mencken's, so, too, were the bourgeois virtues: punctuality, orderliness, loyalty to friends, considerateness. Mencken did not hide his bourgeois origins or mode of living, but neither did he feature them, though in *Happy Days* he wrote:

> I was a larva of the comfortable and complacent bourgeoisie, though I was quite unaware of the fact until I was along in my teens and had begun to read indignant books. To belong to that great order of mankind is vaguely discreditable today, but I still maintain my dues-paying membership in it, and continue to believe that it was and is authentically human, and therefore worthy of the attention of philosophers, at least to the extent that the Mayans, Hittites, Kallikuks, and so on are worthy of it.

In the confirmed bourgeois manner, Mencken even set out to go into his father's business—the manufacture of cigars—but at his father's death, when Mencken was nineteen, he went instead to work for a now defunct Baltimore daily. He was almost immediately hooked for life on what, in another context, he called "the writing insanity." He was also spared going to college, which might have ruined a talent of his particular kind by overrefining it. As with so many other writers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries—Stephen Crane and Theodore Dreiser most prominent among them—Mencken's education came through working on newspapers. His first assignment as a reporter was to write up a hanging. Reporting put him in touch with crime, politics, religion, vice, commerce—with, in short, the common life as it is lived in a large city. His knowledge of the common life—conjoined to his disdain for those aspects of it, religion and politics in particular, most thickly papered over with pretensions—provided Mencken with an inexhaustible subject as a writer. Although they shared a subject matter, Mencken was nearly the reverse of Walt Whitman. Viewing the democratic common man Mencken found little to sing about; he, Mencken, came out of the cradle endlessly laughing. "The *boobus Americanus*," he noted with unconcealed exuberance, "is a bird that knows no closed season."

ALTHOUGH most famous for his excoriations of democratic man—who, in his reading, was a less malevolent yet more comical version of the Yahoo, pathetic in his lack of culture but tyrannical in his narrow-mindedness—Mencken nonetheless achieved a great deal more than (in Edmund Wilson's words) to make "Americans feel the menace of this super-boor [his democratic man] and repudiate their fellowship with him." On the literary front, he was a great force: more than any other single critic, he knocked the pins out from under the genteel tradition, which then held literary taste hostage in the United States. While they still lived, and while their work was still very much in the flux of controversy, Mencken wrote in support of the writing of Shaw, Ibsen, Dreiser, the early Sinclair Lewis (whose novels *Main Street* and *Babbitt* were no doubt directly inspired by Mencken's journalism), F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sherwood Anderson, Willa Cather, H. G. Wells, John Millington Synge, and Joseph Conrad. (The nature of his support was, predictably, of a polemical kind: "When I have to praise a writer," he explained, "I usually do it by attacking his enemies.") He tended to overpraise his friends, Joseph Hergesheimer and James Branch Cabell among them. Yet by and large he possessed a broad disinterest, which did not cut him off from literary work of importance. As an editor, for example, he published stories by James Joyce, though he could not be said to be any great champion of modernism in its more formal aspects. ("Aesthetic problems interest me only mildly. . . .")

Mencken judged writers singly and, for whatever it is worth, his judgments tally with those of our own generation. He was not much taken by Edna St. Vincent Millay, thought D. H. Lawrence overrated, called Hemingway in many respects "a quack but he has a sharp ear and reports the vernacular accurately," spotted Malcolm Cowley as "a yearner who has failed to come off." His

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

support of a particular writer did not preclude awareness of that writer's shortcomings, literary or personal. "He was fundamentally a very foolish fellow," he remarked of Scott Fitzgerald, "and he seemed doomed to be in trouble eternally." In the middle of a tribute to Dreiser, in whose career Mencken himself had provided a crucial helping hand, he noted: "For one thing, he came into the world with an incurable antipathy to the *mot juste*; for another thing, he had an insatiable appetite for the obviously not true." Yet there was a winning modesty about Mencken's view of his own literary judgments. When a biographer queried him about his and Nathan's role in publishing early in their careers so many famous writers in the *Smart Set*, Mencken commented: "The most that can be said for us is that we recognized the good ones when they popped up."

BUT it is not because of his literary taste that H. L. Mencken was first elevated to national prominence and later relegated to the status of a historical curiosity. His contributions to literature are almost all of a positive kind, judged by any standard: he raised the reputations of many writers now recognized to be of the first rank; he fought, consistently and courageously, against censorship; he cleared the air of the professorial stuffiness nearly suffocating literature perhaps even more than did the early (and still much admired) Van Wyck Brooks. No, it is the other Mencken, the political commentator and social theorist, who has proved unacceptable. Remarking in 1926 on Mencken's "extraordinary cleansing and vitalizing effect," Walter Lippmann wrote: "How else can you explain the paradox of his popularity, and the certainty that before he dies he will find himself, like Bernard Shaw today, one of the grand old men, one of the beloved patriarchs of his time?" No prophecy could have been wider of the mark. What happened?

The Depression, in a word, happened. While it is correct to say, as Carl Bode does in his biography, that "from 1920-29 Mencken captained the educated minority of Americans," from the beginning of the Depression till his death there is an unrelieved diminution of influence. For one thing, the Depression caused or accelerated the disappearance of a number of his favorite targets: Prohibition soon ended, the spirit of Babbittry lost its aggressiveness, and reminding Americans of their deficiencies ceased to be a flourishing trade. Nothing in Mencken's stock of ideas quite prepared him to understand the momentousness of the Depression. He had no kind words for the plutocrats that capitalism had floated to the top of American society—he had earlier referred to them as "in the interior-decorator and country-club stage of culture"—and he knew life at the bottom too well to idealize the working class. Yet as a Darwinist who expected the fittest to survive, he was shocked to see that the Depression seemed to mow down nearly everyone alike.

If at first Mencken failed to comprehend the Depression, he next detested what was being done about it—which is to say, he detested Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Mencken was fond of boasting that he had never praised a President of the United States, but FDR he particularly loathed: "A demagogue pure and simple," he called him. "Even when he is advocating some relatively sensible things he does so in terms fit for a fire." One could speculate on the reasons for Mencken's distaste for Roosevelt—they might run from personal affront to a feeling of class disappointment—but perhaps it is enough to record that Mencken greatly distrusted government, which he held to have "always been the great failure of mankind," and FDR stood chiefly for the extension and expansion of government on every front.

Sometimes a writer will change his principal ideas—John Dos Passos is in America the most prominent case—and as a consequence lose his audience. Sometimes a writer does not change his principal ideas at all yet becomes peripheral because his audience has changed its ideas. This, precisely, is the case of H. L. Mencken, whose politics, social theories, and prose style did not seriously change from the 1920's, when he was the premier intellectual figure in the United States, till his death in 1956, when (and for many years before) he was no longer deemed other than a back number.

In part, as I have noted, many of the issues upon which Mencken had risen to prominence had changed, if not evaporated—Puritanism in life and literature is a prime example—but the problem goes beyond discrete issues. As a writer, Mencken was of the plague-on-both-your-houses school. "I am against Puritanism to the last gasp," he wrote to Dreiser in 1919, "but when anti-Puritanism comes to a program and a theory I find myself against it almost as strongly." He also specialized in knocking off two birds with one sentence; thus, of the Palmer raids of 1919-20, he wrote: "Never did it [the plutocracy] function more revealingly than in the late *pogrom* against the so-called Reds, i.e., against humorless idealists who, like Andrew Jackson, took the platitudes of democracy quite seriously." Mencken did not believe that one had to take a side, not even in the search for truth: "It is just as creditable," he notes in a letter, "to hate injustice and dishonesty as it is to love the truth."

As Mencken himself knew when he turned from writing chiefly about literature to writing about society and politics, America was entering a political age. The Depression set the seal on that age. To announce a plague on both houses was less likely to succeed once the Depression had sent nearly everyone in the country scurrying off into one or the other of the two houses. ("All right," John Dos Passos famously declared, "so we are two nations.") The great trick of Mencken's style, that which in the past had always worked for him so well, was that, no matter how fierce his attack

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on how cherished a man or idea or institution, he always somehow managed to get the reader on his, Mencken's, side. But now these readers had irrevocably chosen sides. The brand of imperious disinterestedness which he had so lavishly dispensed and on which his fame rested was no longer winning.

A thoroughgoing skeptic, Mencken held firmly to his belief in the imperfectibility of the human race. "I think," he wrote to a Baltimore reformer, "your fundamental error lies in the assumption that the human race can be made good." As early as 1917 he wrote to Upton Sinclair: "So long as there are men in the world, 99 per cent of them will be idiots. . . . The stupid man, even after he has been convinced that Jonah did not actually swallow the whale, still remains a dunderhead. Today he is on his knees; tomorrow, emancipated, he snorts with the Bolsheviki." Given his belief in imperfectibility, Mencken felt that the "great curse of humanity . . . is idealism." "The two greatest intellectual possessions of modern man," he noted, "are the idea of personal freedom and the idea of the limitation of government." With most intellectuals having been swung leftward by the winds of the Depression, opinions such as Mencken had long held could scarcely hope to earn him new readers, or even to let him retain those he once had.

While H. L. Mencken was one of those writers who have very little good to say for mankind, he was incapable of being hard on men. He suffered fools, if not gladly, then always with consideration. He was perhaps the most famous agnostic of his day—many of his letters to friends are signed "Yrs. in Xt." and endless are those of his quips that turn on a touch of irreverence—yet he treated clergymen with great courtesy, including a nun, one Sister Miriam, with whom he met to discuss what he believed to be her misguided thesis on James Huneker. In the same way, he had no use for Communism or Marxism—"since Marxism came in," he wrote to Dreiser, "the race has produced nothing above the level of a book by Waldo Frank"—yet one discovers him, in his letters, arguing against the deportation of Emma Goldman, defending the rights of an alleged Communist professor at Columbia, staunchly supporting the American Civil Liberties Union. His personal qualities are very impressive: he had a fine sense of fair play; he seems to have been without envy or indignation or malice.

The stereotypical view of Mencken as the great debunker is perhaps overdone. Not that he wasn't quite marvelous at the job; in top form he was better at it than any other American and a rival of William Hazlitt. But there was little of the bully in Mencken in his debunking role. He took on big targets—Presidents and Senators—or impersonal ones—the *boobus Americanus*, the Comstocks, democracy. When he went after another writer, he generally did so with a sense of fair play. Toward the close of a spirited go at Paul Elmer More, for example, Mencken wrote: "More has a solid stock of learning in his lockers; he is armed and outfitted as none of the pollyannas who trail after him is armed and outfitted; he is, perhaps, the nearest approach to a genuine scholar that we have in America, God save us!" Walter Lippmann, who felt a few of Mencken's blows in his own lifetime, and thus knew whereof he spoke, remarked: "His blows have the clean brutality of a natural phenomenon," later adding: "The Mencken attack is always a frontal attack. It is always explicit. The charge is all there. . . . And when you have encountered him, you do not have to wonder whether you are going to be stabbed in the back when you start to leave and are thinking of something else."

If not lining up for the great left-wing causes of the 1930's cost Mencken a large part of his earlier following, his late recognition of the true intent of Adolf Hitler cost him the rest. Mencken had a German problem. That is to say: as a journalist of German ancestry and anti-British feeling, he suffered greatly during World War I for being viewed as insufficiently patriotic. American participation in World War I brought with it a state of frenzied hatred unmatched in our subsequent national history: the German language was barred from many public and private schools, German-Americans were ridiculed and sometimes attacked on the streets, sauerkraut was renamed liberty cabbage. With this history of American anti-German hysteria in mind, Mencken was most hesitant to believe the worst about Hitler, though it cannot really be said that he was neutral on the subject, as the following letter of 1936 to an acquaintance in Frankfurt testifies:

> . . . Some time ago *Stürmer* listed me as a Jew, thus adding one more to its immemorial repertoire of false reports. I should add that I am entirely out of sympathy with the method used by Hitler to handle the Jewish question. It seems to me that the gross brutality to harmless individuals must needs revolt every decent man. I am well aware that reports from Germany have been exaggerated, but am also well aware that intolerable brutalities have been practiced. I don't know a single man of any reputation in America who is in favor of the Nazi scheme. As it stands, Germany has completely lost the sympathy it had during the years following 1920.

In the vague way that such things get started, and once started prove difficult to quash, the story has taken hold that H. L. Mencken was an anti-Semite. Anti-Semitism was not uncommon among the writers of the 1920's—touches of it are in E. E. Cummings, in F. Scott Fitzgerald, more than touches in Pound and Eliot and Hemingway—and comments can be found in the new collection of Mencken letters that will satisfy those in search of confirmation of Mencken's anti-Semitism: in particular, one about traveling aboard ship with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a large number of Jewish passengers and another about Dreiser's anti-Semitism being "simply a reaction against Jewish Communists. They are such God-awful swine that he simply can't stomach them." Against the charge one can bring to bear evidence of Mencken's distaste for Father Coughlin or for Gerald L.K. Smith, the professional anti-Semite, who, Mencken said, "never stoops to talk sense." Or one could argue that some of Mencken's best friends were Jews, which they were.

But the greatest argument against the charge of anti-Semitism is the evidence, displayed throughout Mencken's writings, of the degrading things he had to say about *all* American ethnic groups, including, one hastens to add, his own, the German-Americans: "The Germans, taking one with another, are on the cultural level of greengrocers." And elsewhere: "They have all the unpleasantness of really efficient people. I am, in a way, one of them myself, but I have become Americanized enough to dislike their cocksureness." Chinks, wops, japs, micks, niggers, kikes—Mencken found the whole ethnic carousel of American life wildly comic. All groups were fair game. One might accuse Mencken of prejudice, perhaps, but of discrimination, never.

Before the stroke that, in 1948, put an end to his active career (though he would live eight years longer, dying at seventy-five in 1956), Mencken recognized, with a remarkable absence of resentment, that he was no longer of much interest to the intellectual life of the United States. "The life of every man who dissents from the prevailing ideas is bound to be more or less lonely," he wrote. He also saw his writing as of a unity: "All my work hangs together. Whether it appears to be burlesque, or serious criticism, or more casual controversy, it is always directed against one thing: unwarranted pretension. It always seeks to expose a false pretense, to blow up a wobbly axiom, to uncover a sham virtue."

Toward the end of his life Mencken had no complaints. "I approach senility," he wrote to one of his correspondents, "without feeling I have been deprived of anything I really deserved." And yet one wonders if his reputation doesn't deserve to stand higher than it now does. The "extraordinary cleansing and vitalizing effect" Walter Lippmann found in Mencken's prose more than half a century ago is still to be found in it. Lippmann may have been right, too, in attributing this wondrous effect to the fact that Mencken's blows "are directed by a warm and violent but an unusually healthy mind which is not divided, as most minds are, by envy and fear and ambition and anxiety."

CERTAINLY we have no one like him today, though the literary forest be filled with men toting axes. Too often, one discovers, these hatchet men—Gore Vidal and Garry Wills come to mind—are intent less on making a clean kill than on honing their blades on the grindstone of politics. When the hatchet men are not so overtly political—as in the case of the movie and drama critic John Simon—they are specialists in overkill, reminding one of that now obscure attacker of Lord Macaulay, a man named Rogers, of whom it was said that he wrote to murder Macaulay but ended in committing suicide (a mistake Mencken never made). Tom Wolfe is sometimes referred to as the H.L. Mencken of our age. No other writer, surely, is more in touch with the status life in America, where the subjects of Wolfe's most telling devastations—the rich, the upper-middle-class bohemians, the yearning intellectual class—have their abode. Nor can one accuse Wolfe of not having a style. What sometimes seems missing from Wolfe's writing is a quality of magnanimity that shines through Mencken's essays, especially those that are unalloyed by polemic.

Opinions shift and shuttle back and forth every ten years or so, but Mencken's prose retains a buoyancy that remains unchanged over more than half a century. He believed it was the duty of everyone who could reflect and write to speak out on the issues and questions of his day. On the issues and questions of his own day Mencken could scarcely be said to have been impartial, but neither was he in the least petty. Toward the end of his active life he wrote: "The country swarms with quacks and swindles that ought to be done in the grand manner." The quacks and swindles have given no evidence of abating, but the grand manner with which they so richly deserve to be dealt requires a certain generosity of spirit and largeness of heart. Mencken had both, and it is sufficient to show how rare these qualities are by noting sadly that there is no one writing today who even faintly resembles him.

As for the influence of Mencken, it is of a kind best caught by George Eliot in a brief essay of 1855 on Thomas Carlyle, another writer of "objectionable" opinions:

> The influence of such a writer is dynamic. He does not teach men how to use sword and musket, but he inspires their souls with courage and sends a strong will into their muscles. He does not, perhaps, enrich your stock of data, but he clears away the film from your eyes that you may search for data to some purpose. He does not, perhaps, convince you, but he strikes you, undeceives you, animates you.

H. L. Mencken is such a writer.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Man Who Refused to Watch the Academy Awards

A Story

David Evanier

I DREAM *that my friend Michael and a crony are in Hollywood, beside the pool, dressed in red, white, and blue suits, and top hats. Michael asks me, "How is your father?"*

"Still the most ridiculous person I've ever met!" I reply. Michael and his crony bark with laughter at this, pleased. I have said it to please, but am shocked to hear my own words, which I do not mean at all—

I have been waiting three months for a letter that will never arrive. From my friend Michael, who is a director in Los Angeles. It would be a response to the letter I wrote to him: the first letter in which I ever lied to him. I had falsely praised his last play (the second to be produced on Broadway in two years), a black gospel musical about the murders of the civil-rights figures.

In Michael's play, the assassination of Malcolm X, for example, is followed by the reaction of the cast. One actor turns to another and says, "My God, this is terrible—I feel sick." The other person says, "We're not gonna let anything keep us down," and sings a song, "Keep on Truckin'," with hand-clapping from the audience and, after jumping off the stage, some fancy prancing up and down the aisles. Then the murders of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Robert Kennedy, and Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman.

I waited several weeks to write him after seeing it, a delay he must have noticed, since he'd given me passes to the fourth night. I did not know what to say. I finally wrote him. "It was even better than your wedding!" (Michael had staged his wedding in a theater, with people performing on stage and dancing in the aisles.)

I had lied. It was not at all like his wedding.

He did not reply.

A YEAR and a half ago, I was seated in my cubicle at *Animals* magazine, where I am an editor, flicking the pages of *Variety* and swallowing hard. There, in the list of notables who were traveling to one of the three places *Variety* considers important enough to mention, "New York—L.A.—Europe," there in the "L.A. to New York" list was Michael's name: Michael Greenberg. He had made it. His first Broadway show was opening the following month.

I smiled to myself. I put on a hearty look of congratulations. A "give him credit—he worked for it" look. But I was upset for a number of reasons. Mainly envy. Also hurt—he hadn't told me he was coming to New York. Most importantly, his success was another nail in my coffin. Or so it seemed at that minute. When my secretary poked her nose in the door, I screamed, *"Who cares about animals anyway? What are we wasting our lives on?"*

I took a librium. I felt miserable. I hated myself for what I felt. He had moved too fast. It was only yesterday he installed the tape machine on his phone that gave you his recorded voice when he was out and a minute to talk your message into the receiver. *That* was impressive—especially if you knew, as I did, that he was living in two closet-size rooms on Fourteenth Street and Eighth Avenue. That was pure *chutzpah,* that machine—a $250 investment in his future. I should have known then. There was already a certain change—an iciness—talking to a machine, hearing my friend's voice from that spooky remove.

And wasn't it just a few years ago, Michael and Linda thumbing their way to L.A., his teeth rotting? I hadn't had the time to adjust to his wonderful success. The four years in Calgary, where I studied creative writing, didn't help either.

Of course I had to remember nastily his father. Long before I met Michael, I sat in the sun in my bathing suit at Greenacres in the Catskills. I was fourteen years old. A short man with a big dog was giving a lecture to the guests at poolside: Michael's father. The staff psychiatrist. A nephew of Greenacres Sr. He smoked a pipe. He told a joke to warm us up. He addressed us all as "darling." He'd been doing this a long time. His talk was called "Whores I Have Known." It got quiet. Five minutes later he switched to "Bores I Have Known." Then, "Shores I Have Known" (travel lore). He answered questions for thirty minutes, including two about sunburn.

A short, chubby man; the dog lent him a certain style.

Michael kept him a secret for five years—as well

DAVID EVANIER, a new contributor, is a young writer whose stories have appeared in the *Paris Review,* the *Transatlantic Review,* and elsewhere. He received the Aga Khan Fiction Prize last year and has recently completed a novel.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as his entire Greenacres heritage. His father had become famous, but Michael summed up succinctly his own opinion: "He sold out." New School radical, crazy about the oppressed—Michael starved on Fourteenth Street rather than take a dime.

He stayed free, *and sold out on his own!* What am I saying and what am I thinking? I should have hung on in therapy for an eleventh year and achieved rationality. My therapist said I was just about to break through.

A previous therapist interpreted a dream I had about Michael when I first met him in 1965 at the New School. In my dream, I place Michael in a box. I close the lid. I enclose the box in another box, which I enclose in another box, which I enclose in yet another box.

"Is he aggressive?" my therapist asks.

"No. He's short."

"But is he aggressive?"

"Yes."

"Very aggressive?"

I smile. "Yes, I guess he is."

"Are you afraid of him?"

"No. He's my friend."

"But are you afraid of his aggressiveness?"

"No."

"Yes."

"Yes, I am."

MICHAEL has a way of looking at people. If you are suffering, he suspends any movement; he seems to have put everything aside and is focusing only on you. There is pain in his look. Yet it is hard to catch him at it. For when you pause, stammering, his gaze seems to shift to an inch over you, or around you, so that you do not become self-conscious. But you know he is with you. When you are in control, he looks directly at you again.

Sometimes he would catch my panic, and it would become his.

He had migraines here for days on end, leaving him unable to function. What happens to migraines in Hollywood?

MICHAEL finally did call me at *Animals* that day. I got over my relief and immediately became anxious about demonstrating to him that my career was progressing. I deepened my voice.

My wife and I met him for dinner. He had seen Labelle, the rock group, the night before. He said reflectively, "Black and gay—that's the wave of the future."

To anyone else in the world I would have said, "What the hell does that *mean?*" and "Isn't there a certain contradiction there?"

I only smiled and nodded my head vigorously, my muscles tensing, my eyes twitching. I had to cut through the bullshit and establish what *I* was doing that I was proud of. My wife and I took him up the elevator to my studio in the office building off Times Square. We got off at the twenty-sixth floor, and we walked with him up the narrow winding orange staircase to the studio tower where plaster fell from the ceiling in chunks. I opened the door.

Ducking the plaster he stood by the window. We talked about our work, about our hopes.

He asked me how my father was. I told him that my father, who lived alone, had recently taken to tagging along when the prisoners at the jail near his house were taken out on pleasure trips, and that he ate his meals at the prisoners' cafeteria.

Michael shook his head.

He looked out at Manhattan, the Public Library, Bryant Park, and the river, and said, "Here you will write many stories about the city."

In a minute he was gone.

The next day I called him at the hotel. A female answered. I thought he was playing around. He wasn't. It was Linda, who, instinctively, I had never really liked. An icy wind always blew from Linda—in the old days, and now. There had been no change.

I had awakened the baby. "Do you want to speak to her? She's very cross at you for waking her up."

A voice said, "You woke me up!" There was a pause. "You woke me up!" Pause. "You woke me up out of a sound sleep!"

I could not believe it was the baby. I thought Linda was putting me on. Two-and-a-half years had gone by since I had seen her and the baby in Santa Monica.

The baby's voice stayed with me, all that day and the next.

MICHAEL flew back and forth and then it was preview night. Opening night was two days away. We had been invited to the preview. The disturbing meaning of that occupied my time and I swallowed a pint of rum to relax.

I scanned the program and noted that Michael, director of the show, was, among other things, vice president of Imprisoned Creators, Inc. Of course—he'd been especially interested in prisoners for years, working as a volunteer with them in workshops—but still it surprised me now. Michael, who had settled into a Hollywood home, who at this moment was circulating in the lobby with the kissers-and-huggers set. When did he have time for prisoners? I saw his curly hair, the bald spot in the back, his shaggy proletarian jacket with patches of corduroy as he reached to kiss.

I overheard him talking to one of the beautiful people about the swimming pool he was having installed. He had not told me. He caught my surprise—and laughed self-consciously. A bad moment between us.

When the show began, I grasped Michael's comment over dinner that night, for he had worked part of it in.

Black basketball stars, making their theater debut as black prisoners talking extemporaneously

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and singing about their experiences. It was hard to make out their words. I frequently heard them say, "You had to be there to experience it" and "Damn the Man." The audience cried out "Amen!" The set was a back canvas of a prison wall. The music was a piano player. The audience was weeping from the time the curtain opened. At the end of the act, the actors joined hands with the audience. The audience joined hands. Swaying, they all sang "We Shall Overcome." Tears were streaming down my cheeks. I was confused.

At intermission, they sold souvenir pictures and descriptions of the basketball stars for a dollar. The bar did a booming business. The show would run forever. Michael handed over Linda to talk to us while he circulated. She was guarded and cautious, the way she had always been. She loved L.A. She sounded defensive, as if we'd take it away from her. She was writing for *Kojak* and *Cosmopolitan*. She said it was all crap, but she didn't mean it and didn't expect us to agree. What fed her dislike was my agreement. Still, she had a certain pity and compassion toward me after all these years. I felt like screaming.

Michael walked over to us, left, came back. The strained conversation with Linda went on. We were all standing in the crowded street, lights and smoke. A woman walked out of the theater saying, "You hope someone will say 'hi' to you—"

"Hi!" I heard my own voice.

It got a laugh, but I didn't know what I was doing.

Being a hit, I continued. I said hello to strangers, answered questions directed to people near us. I was babbling away, uncharacteristically convivial.

Michael and Linda weren't around at curtain. We waited outside the theater. I greeted more strangers.

Michael didn't appear.

MICHAEL was quoted in the press that week as declaring that the attitude toward blacks in the theater was still racist. "They all said, 'Don't bring the play to New York. Blacks wouldn't pay to go to the theater.' It was a lie. Blacks *will* pay!"

I FIRST met Michael in the New School cafeteria in 1965. I was neurotic. In the East Village church where, as a Jewish socialist atheist, they let me live in the tower, I laughed aloud at the news of JFK's assassination.

Michael lived in two rooms with a hot plate on Fourteenth Street. He had an energy to him. Notes, address books, magazines poured out of the pockets of his jacket and raincoat. He wanted to be a director.

We climbed up the fire escape of the church together to the tower, where I read him my poems and stories. He encouraged me, and brought me candles.

In winter we would stand outside the New School, in the freezing snow and rain, exchanging phone numbers of girls and articles we liked. One day he mentioned a girl he had met. Linda. I knew who she was: the fabulous blonde in my literature class who kept injecting the word "Revolution!" into literary discussions.

It was the time of the Beatles; Abbie Hoffman stripping nude at Fillmore East; Paul Krassner's youth; the Fuck You Bookstore on Avenue A tended by Ed Sanders; Jack Micheline, Ray Bremser, and Allen Ginsberg reading at the 9 Arts Coffee Gallery run by a sailor in a loft above Eighth Avenue and Forty-third Street; Dave Van Ronk and Bob Dylan at the Gaslight on MacDougal. It was a dismal time.

Michael was part of that period—not me. I had nothing to do with it. I attended classes. At midnight I left the tower and walked in the snow along MacDougal Street past the San Remo, where O'Neill had worked (and Bodenheim and Joe Gould had begged), to the Café Figaro, where the young bohemians hung out. I sat down with my notebook, a pen, drank a double espresso. I waited. My pen started flying as I really gave it to my father, my mother, and several mean teachers. The waiter came by periodically. I waved him away.

At 4 A.M. one morning he asked me if I wanted anything else. I looked up wearily, picturing myself doing it. "Can't you see I'm writing?"

At 5 A.M., he said, "Are you sure you don't want anything else?"

"Perfectly!" I said.

"Get out," he said.

"What?"

"Get out."

"I'll order something."

"Get out."

I grabbed my things and, trembling, weaved my way down MacDougal Street. It was deserted, except for a man in a hallway who screamed again and again, "I don't hate—*nobody*. I don't hate—*nobody*." The snow was falling. It crept into my shoes. I felt a weariness and a sense of persecution. I felt good. I walked into Washington Square Park, white with snow coating the leaves of the trees. It was dawn.

I leapt into the air.

I WAS going to Israel for the summer. Michael and I both chuckled. "Shit, it's the only country my father will send me to."

Michael shook his head in commiseration. "A counterrevolutionary arm of American imperialism."

"Exactly."

At the memorial, Yad Vashem, outside of Jerusalem, there was an eternal flame for each of the concentration camps.

The blue and white Israeli flag—like laundry, or a glass of milk—moved me; so did the dancing on the kibbutz accompanied by flutes. The sight and sound of children—Jewish children—in the breezy garden in Haifa. Normal things.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When I got back to New York in the fall, the New York *Times* reported the death of Daniel Burros, a member of the American Nazi party, and disclosed that Burros was Jewish. Michael suggested that I write a play about it. He suggested the title: *Jew-Nazi!*

I tried to get into the head of Burros. I couldn't even imagine him. I gave him my bar mitzvah, my first girlfriend, my sex fantasies. Michael was crazy about everything I wrote. He ripped the pages from my typewriter as I typed and kept muttering, "Sensational!"

He suggested a childhood scene in which Burros's authoritarian tendencies are first revealed. Burros is shown insisting on directing a line of children his age at school, ordering them around. Then Michael wrote a song which he intended to have the chorus sing. The lyrics went: "Why do I feel so brutal,/When at heart I know I'm a Jew?"

The first rehearsal was held at Michael's new loft. I trembled all through it. *Jew-Nazi!* was more of a comedy than I had intended. The potential backers, embarrassed, drifted away.

Michael was hopeful. "It needs work, but it's already quite wonderful." My friend Michael. I am sure he meant it.

MICHAEL had rented the large loft for himself and Linda. There was plenty of work space: an act of celebration after Fourteenth Street. Space to make love, to work, to have rehearsals: light and air. Bookshelves everywhere, posters, records, productivity. I had always lived in one room. Michael's bicycle was in the hallway. He bicycled around the city. A basketball was in the corner. I pointed at it, speechless. I had only played ping-pong and potsy.

"I play on my lunch hours," he explained.

"Huh?" I was trying to absorb it.

"Yeah, you know, these little corners of buildings, vacant lots, with the Puerto Rican kids."

Normality, fearlessness, health, sunshine, brotherhood in Manhattan. I was deeply impressed. There were sides to him new to me.

Then Michael and Linda were getting married, and I was getting ready to break up with my girl before she broke up with me, and flee to Calgary. I had sublet a room on St. Mark's Place.

One day Michael suddenly said, "Write a poem for our wedding."

"Just like that?"

Michael smiled and shrugged.

ON THE day before the wedding, I went back to my girl's apartment to pick up my books. She had called me insistently, giving me a deadline. It was a steaming hot July day. I stood on the stoop in front of the apartment house on Stuyvesant Street waiting for Michael. He had promised to help me carry the books. I had drunk a pint of rum. I leaned against the brick wall.

Michael was late. I waited. Then I saw him, grinning, waving, walking his bobbing, busy walk; slung over his shoulder was a green canvas bag.

We shook hands and embraced. "How the hell do you think of these things?" I asked, pointing to the bag.

"How else are you going to carry them, dummy?"

We walked up the five flights of stairs.

My girl was at the door. "This is Pepper." A short black man with glazed eyes waved at us, and went back to his phone conversation. I stared at him.

"Hey, come on—" Michael called.

I tossed the books into the bag.

On the way down the stairs, I said, "Did you see that guy?"

"Poor passive schmuck," Michael said. We carried the heavy load of books to the room on St. Mark's Place.

I had been working on a play about the girl.

"How's the play going, Bruce?"

"You haven't got time now, Mike—"

"Sure I do."

We put the books down and I read my play to him.

I looked up occasionally as I read. He was smiling. When I finished he made a circle with his finger and thumb. "You're being very productive, Bruce. It's wonderful."

I walked back down with him to St. Mark's Place. It was difficult to speak. Crowds pushed against us.

I watched Michael going off down the street, the empty green bag over his shoulder, hurrying to Linda.

I was shivering.

IT WAS early morning of Michael's wedding day. I lay in bed drinking rum and read the personal ads in the *East Village Other*. One girl wanted to meet a fellow whose middle initial was J, and no one else. Another said she had trouble talking with people, nothing serious, but would prefer to correspond with someone for the time being. A third was seeking a "combination of Eldridge Cleaver and Holden Caulfield, but Jewish and sincere."

Five hours to the wedding. I dialed an ad: Club Mogen David. A voice told me they had someone very special for me to meet: Martha Goldberg. Martha was twenty-four, and would soon make *aliyah* to Jerusalem.

In a flat gravel voice, Martha spoke to me over the phone: "I am tender, affectionate, sincere." I quickly walked to Twenty-third Street and Ninth Avenue. Now I wouldn't be alone at the wedding. I would bring along this affectionate Jewish girl and casually mention to Michael and Linda that we were emigrating to Israel. Michael would be so happy for me.

Martha answered the door. She was heavy but not fat. She wore a blouse, skirt, and sneakers. She did not smile. I heard growls.

Four huge dogs headed for me, gnashing their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

teeth. "Down!" Martha commanded them. She pointed her fist at the floor. "Down! You will obey me." The dogs moved toward her. She settled herself on the bed, the dogs around her. She stroked them, and they licked at her partially opened blouse. When I opened my mouth, they growled. She leaned back and stretched, thrusting her breasts outward. The dogs licked her. She dangled her thick legs.

She spoke only when I did, and after a pause. Yes, she was headed for Israel. There was a growing horse and dog market there. She would raise them.

I told her I had been to Israel.

"Good," she said after a long pause.

"I have a wedding today, where I'm going to read a poem to my best friend and his bride." I explained that Michael was directing his own wedding at a theater.

"I'm not much on weddings," she said.

"Oh. You don't want to come?"

"Not particularly."

"Why?"

"It sounds mod and phony to me. Why hold a wedding in a theater?"

"He's a director—"

"I'm not interested in the theater."

I stood up. The dogs stood up and surrounded me. "Down!" she shouted, stamping her sneaker.

I said goodbye and staggered down the stairs.

AT THE wedding, Michael's father stood on the stage and told the story of Michael as a schoolchild ordering around a line of children at school, as an early sign of his son's directing ability.

It was very quiet then. I moved into the lights, to the center of the stage. I took the paper from my pocket and held it. My voice trembled as I read:

To Michael and Linda.

One.

"But the real issue is revolution!"
Said Linda to the instructor in the New School class

And shortly after I met Michael in the school cafeteria
Carrying his armload of books,
The *Nation, National Guardian,* notes,
numbers, appointments.

One day he said, "I've met this girl. . ."

How does friendship grow in the city?
How does love?

Two.

Some of us submerge those we love.
But Michael and Linda shouted, fought, planned revolution, marched on picket lines.
Shaped each other. Michael: director.
Linda: lyricist. Beside Michael, she wrote and sang, "I sleep so still."

Three.

Our friendship: common struggles. . .
Jobs, New York in winter, therapy, the draft, reading my work to them.
Common joys: Michael's first plays,
And I at the *Tribune,*
publishing.
The passage of time.

Four.

Michael and Linda in the two closet rooms on Fourteenth Street
Corie and I on the fifth floor,
17 Stuyvesant Street

George Burns said of his late wife Gracie Allen:

"Then, in 1928, I got my big break.
And I married her.
And we were together a long, long time."

Then Rabbi Rick Levi spoke. He had recently been fired as chaplain at Yale for his revolutionary politics. He talked about his experience for a long time. The audience shouted "Right on!" but after a while they became restless. They began to talk among themselves.

The rabbi finally finished.

When it was over, I walked out into the hot sunlight, and down the Bowery.

The next week I left for Calgary.

MICHAEL had gotten a job with a theater company in Los Angeles. Michael and Linda settled in Santa Monica.

He wrote me often over the years, encouraging me, his letters frantic, surging, the letters half-typed in his impatience, filled with half-words I learned to decipher.

He had a perfect job, his own theater, a lunch-time program for local workers, a prison program of theater workshops with kids from the reform school.

In 1972, he wrote: "The movie people are brutal and demanding . . . like the garment industry. . . . Am planning next season's work and reading, refurbishing my soul and thinking of parenthood—very strange."

We exchanged happy letters. I was married, and publishing.

IN DECEMBER, my wife and I left the snow and freezing cold of Calgary for the holidays and arrived in Santa Monica, where it was warm, bright, and sunny, to stay with Michael and Linda for a week.

We slept in the baby's room, surrounded by a crib and toys for the coming baby. The house was filled with books and playscripts. Michael's sun-dappled workroom was lined with posters for children's, Vietnamese, mental-patients' and prisoners' liberation, as well as theater posters of plays he had directed. He had a complete file of our correspondence and my writing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There was a book on Michael's desk, *Forming Your Own Corporation,* lying alongside a pamphlet on combating American imperialism in Asia and Latin America.

Linda showed us a closet of lavish suede clothes —jackets and suits—she had bought for Michael, which she saved for him, but which he defiantly refused to wear. He wore the clothes of the people —as did everyone in the theater and movie colony in Los Angeles.

They had a maid, a college student. Linda paid her a dollar an hour, but also threw in lessons in Marxist theory.

Michael and Linda's bicycles leaned against the trees in their back yard. Avocados fell from the trees and dropped into the yard.

Michael and Linda spent the evenings watching television. He hoped to direct TV films, and watched carefully. They told me that when visiting New York they had taken a taxi and when the driver turned to them, it was Rabbi Rick Levi.

One evening, Michael said, "It's terrible to be so Jewish . . . and at such an early age!" Cackles came from him and Linda, and I laughed too, not knowing why.

I told him I had thought of him when watching Joel Grey receive the Academy Award on television. Grey, with his elfin look and smile, reminded me of him. He had said, holding the Oscar, "Don't let anybody tell you this isn't a terrific feeling," and I had pictured Michael.

Michael laughed. "Oh, I never watch the Academy Awards. I made a vow never to watch that commercial bullshit."

Our room was next to theirs. Michael did Linda's pregnancy exercises along with her every day. We heard them counting. We also heard a lot of laughter, and the sound of continual munching.

The refrigerator was filled with milk, yogurt, coconut juice, health foods. Everything reeked of health. We hid our liquor.

In the baby's room we awoke to their laughter.

One morning, I awoke, heard their laughter, and wept. My wife cradled me in her arms.

"THE L.A. *Free Press* is crap," Michael said. Before I had a chance to agree, he went on. "But they've got one really good service. If you send your grass or any dope to them, they'll analyze it for you and let you know what's in it and if it's safe."

"Have you used the service?" I asked, trying to get into the spirit.

Michael nodded. "Yeah, sure. It was very helpful."

"THIS is the town for you, Bruce," Michael said. "These laid-back bland blondes don't have the energy. It's a terrific place for a New Yorker with talent and brains. You know, Bruce, I'm surprised you didn't blow your brains out in Calgary. We've got to get you out of there."

He earnestly, arduously set about finding me a job in the movie colony. He found an apartment for me and my wife to sublet behind theirs. He came by in the morning, leaving pastry at the door and copies of the *Daily Variety, Billboard, Cashbox,* the New York and L.A. *Times.* During the day he phoned me with interviews he had set up. In the evening he waited for the news.

The first week I saw three people. The second week, five.

Nothing worked. Michael looked away or directly downward as I talked to him, giving explanations, expressing my hopes.

When he was especially hopeful, he would say: "You won't get it."

I didn't.

It was while Michael and Linda were away for a week that I saw the ad for the job at *Animals* in Manhattan. I left a note for Michael and Linda, and flew to New York for the interview.

I AM left with a recent dream, and with a memory of certain changes on that trip to Los Angeles.

My wife and I are visiting Michael at his new home in Hollywood. There is no talking. Michael is just too busy. Linda doesn't talk to us at all. Michael is on his way out to dinner. I stop him and ask him about the story I recently published and have mailed him two separate times. He claimed he didn't receive it the first time.

"Did you get the copy of my story?"

"Which story?"

"My story."

"Uh. No," Michael says.

"But I sent it a second time."

"That's very possible. The secretary probably got it and didn't know."

"But then how can I get a copy to you?" I ask.

"I don't know."

"But don't you want to read it?"

"Sure."

"But there's no way to get a copy to you safely."

"Well, I can't sleep with it, you know," Michael says in a surly way.

Then, trying to mollify me: "Look, we'll think about it. We'll work something out."

He's on his way out to dinner. He brags: "Three-fifty for shrimp marinara, fifty cents tip." He recites it proudly.

On the way out, Michael and Linda show me and my wife where we will sleep: the garage. It is neat, spacious, and clean, with big bookshelves. I say: "This is nicer than our house!"

Michael cackles, pleased. This breaks the ice. He repeats it to Linda. She likes it too. We all laugh now, more relaxed.

And the memory:

Over lunch in Los Angeles, before I was going for a job interview that Michael had arranged, he suddenly said to me: "Have you got a ten-dollar bill on you? I'll pay you back later."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I hesitated, looking at the impatience in his eyes. I was sure he had taken to doing this often, and that he would never mention the ten dollars again.

On the night before we left, Michael took us to see the newest Franklin National Bank of Santa Monica. He stopped the car, and gazed at it in the moonlight. We sat politely.

His last letters were not written in his personal, almost illegible schoolboy's scrawl. They were typed on a letterhead, written in pristine language, and signed: Much love, HIGH NOON PRODUCTIONS. Beneath, the secretary had written in his name and their initials: MG/lbd.

NEW YORK is rancid now. I can't do the things I loved: walk across the Brooklyn Bridge at sunset, sit in Washington Square Park. The Hell's Angels have taken over the East Village, the terminal-sex crowd is in command of the far reaches of the West Village.

The Fillmore East is a charcoaled ruin, the wreck of a marquee ghosting Second Avenue. The Automats are empty halls, shared by senior citizens and bums, and at night the lights are dimmed and belly dancers shake for a five-dollar admission.

I scour the city, evoking the past. *Animals* isn't that bad; I have good insurance and medical benefits, and I can write at night if I don't have a drink first.

Michael is in Los Angeles. He is sitting in on boardroom meetings where the smoke is thick, the air full of crazy energy. I see him. His laugh, his charm are well-liked. The other executives also have beards, wear denims, and, like Michael, have firm social consciences.

I even hear his laugh now, and it disarms me, as does his voice, and his face.

But I keep seeing the look on his face when he waited for me to give him the ten-dollar bill. The repetition of the memory is as insistent as the look on his face was.

In the midst of chatter, memories, stories that day, what mattered was the passing of the bill from my hand to his—the tension before it happened, while he waited, and the resolution of it when he took the bill, pocketed it, and signaled to the waitress.

I remember the scraping of our chairs as we stood up to go.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Why Breira?

Joseph Shattan

EVER since the end of the Yom Kippur War in October 1973, pressure has mounted around the world for a final settlement of the Middle East conflict; scenarios and counter-scenarios have been proposed, the merits of step-by-step diplomacy have been weighed against the merits of an overall settlement achieved at once and among each of the parties, and in this country an agonizing debate has gone on over the proper role of the United States with regard to the contending sides, and especially with regard to Israel. In the midst of all this, as might be expected, much talk has taken place inside the American Jewish community about relations between that community and the Israeli government and people—what they have been, what they might be, what they ought to be.

Of late, much of this talk has focused on a new and controversial Jewish group called Breira, which advertises itself as offering "a 'choice' for shared responsibility between Israel and the Diaspora." On the one hand, the emergence of Breira (the word in Hebrew means "alternative") has been hailed by the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post* as a major political development, auguring a new willingness on the part of American Jews to criticize the state of Israel. On the other hand, some American Jewish organizations have reacted to Breira with suspicion and hostility, and one group, Americans for A Safe Israel, has published a well-documented pamphlet, written by Rael Jean Isaac, which challenges Breira's legitimacy and charges that "the majority who join [it] are unaware of the purposes of the minority who shape the path of the organization."* Mrs. Isaac's arguments merit serious consideration, but first it is necessary to know something of Breira's history.

Breira was founded in the immediate aftermath of the Yom Kippur War. It offered to serve as the vehicle, within the Jewish community, for an open and critical discussion of all matters of concern to American Jews, especially their relation to Israel. Its initial statement of purpose, issued in December 1973, declared: "Nothing is more important for the continued vitality of Jewish life than extensive discussion within the Jewish community about the State [of Israel], its problems, its policies, its relationship to us and our hopes for it." At the time of its founding Breira was made up of young veterans of the 60's Jewish counter-culture (grouped mainly around *Response* magazine) and a number of Reform and Conservative rabbis concerned with asserting the spiritual and cultural parity of Jewish life in the Diaspora with that in Israel.

Breira first came to the wider attention of American Jewry on November 4, 1974, when it issued a flyer opposing the mass "Rally Against Terror" held to protest Yasir Arafat's appearance before the United Nations. This demonstration, in Breira's view, was counterproductive, and "only reinforced Jewish anxiety and Israeli isolation." Since the Arab League had designated the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, "coming to terms with the future role of the PLO in negotiations with Israel" had become a "necessity," and Breira called on the Israeli government to declare its willingness to negotiate with "the full range of Palestinian leadership." (Interestingly, most of the members of Breira's Advisory Committee refused to endorse this statement.)

Until the middle of 1975, Breira voiced its criticism of Israeli policy within the confines of the Jewish community, where it had to build a base of support in order to become a viable organization. While the results of Breira's "membership drive" were not spectacular, neither were they insignificant. To its initial core of members Breira was able to add a considerable number of rabbis who had been active in the civil-rights and anti-war movements of the 1960's, among them Eugene Borowitz, Balfour Brickner, Joachim Prinz, Arnold Jacob Wolf (who is now Breira's chairman), and quite a few campus Hillel rabbis. Although all were "Zionists," some of these rabbis were not al-

JOSEPH SHATTAN, who has recently received his doctorate at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, has written in COMMENTARY and elsewhere on Middle Eastern affairs and modern European history.

* *Breira: Counsel for Judaism*, by Rael Jean Isaac, Americans For A Safe Israel, 30 pp., $1.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

together out of sympathy with Al Fatah, even as they had not been totally unsympathetic to the Vietcong.*

Although Breira's statement of purpose had placed a considerable range of issues on the organization's agenda, and had cited the need for "extensive discussion and debate within the Jewish community" about these issues, it soon became evident, first, that the one subject that held Breira's interest was in the fate of the Palestinians in the Middle East and, second, that little prior discussion was taking place even on what Breira's own position was to be on that subject. In July 1975, Robert Loeb, Breira's executive director, testified before Senator McGovern's Subcommittee on Near Eastern Affairs and called upon Israel to negotiate directly with the PLO "on all future relationships between their two states [*sic*]." Statement after statement was issued by Loeb, in Breira's name, criticizing Israeli policy, especially on the West Bank. Mark Bruzonsky, a columnist for *inter-Change*, Breira's monthly review, wrote in *Newsday* (August 27, 1976) that the United States ought to "impose its leverage" on Israel and even "coerce" it, if necessary, into negotiating with the PLO and establishing a Palestinian state on the West Bank and in Gaza. Arthur Waskow, of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington and a member of Breira's executive committee, held seminars under Breira's auspices for members of Congress "to open," as he put it, "new perspectives they hadn't considered" with regard to a resolution of the Palestinian question.

In the spring of 1976 Breira circulated a statement expressing solidarity with the "peace forces" in Israel actively opposed to Gush Emunim, an Israeli political-religious group which calls for the annexation of occupied West Bank territories. The statement was endorsed by many Jewish intellectuals not associated with Breira, and it was the understanding of some of them, at least, that the statement would in no way be linked to Breira. When the statement, entitled "It is Time to Say No to Gush Emunim," appeared in the Jerusalem *Post*, it did indeed make no mention of Breira. Loeb, however, simultaneously issued a press release in which Breira openly took responsibility for the statement, and on the strength of this the New York *Times* published an editorial lauding Breira and noting that it was "picking up wide support among influential Jewish intellectuals . . . overcoming as well the misapprehension of many Jewish Americans that criticism of Israeli policies would be seen as a rejection of Israel."

With an editorial endorsement from the *Times*, Breira suddenly became an organization of national prominence. To the roster of names on its various committees were added those of *Village Voice* radicals like Paul Cowan and Vivian Gornick and, more significantly, those of distinguished American Jewish intellectuals like Irving Howe, Arthur A. Cohen, and Nathan Glazer. When a series of private meetings was held last November between PLO representatives and a number of American Jews, among them Breira's Arthur Waskow, it was Waskow who published a piece on the New York *Times* Op-Ed page about it. So well established had Breira become that at the end of February of this year it was able to hold its first national conference, featuring as speakers a number of well-known political analysts and religious figures.

IF BREIRA has attracted the attention and support of many rabbis, liberal intellectuals, and Jewish students and professors, it has also become the object of a good deal of concern within the organized Jewish community. Much of that concern, articulated in detail in Rael Jean Isaac's study of Breira,† is grounded in the prehistory of the group and of those running it. Robert Loeb, for example, the executive director, came to Breira from a group called CONAME (Committee on New Alternatives in the Middle East), where he had been in charge of field activities; and John Ruskay, who along with Loeb has worked on a full-time basis for Breira from the beginning (he is now its secretary), had served on CONAME's steering committee. At least one other prominent member of Breira had been affiliated with something called MERIP (Middle East Research and Information Project), and both CONAME and MERIP appear to have had close links with the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, a radical think-tank and organizing center founded in 1963 by Marcus Raskin and Richard Barnet. All of these organizations, Mrs. Isaac goes on to show, have had a history of hostility to Israel.

Lavishly funded by grants from various foundations, the Institute for Policy Studies supports a number of staff members all of whom are engaged in specific "projects." For some time, Arthur

* In an article for *Sh'ma* magazine, Rabbi Balfour Brickner described the "intense personal conflict" he had felt during the Jordanian civil war in 1970, when a "radical Jewish friend" phoned from Washington and asked him to take the lead in collecting Jewish names to protest possible United States intervention. "The issue might have been simple for the ordinary American Jew," Rabbi Brickner wrote, "but not for those who, despite their love of Israel, had long and loudly protested their country's intervention into the Vietnamese civil war. Was the Jordanian situation any different?" After prolonged soul-searching, Rabbi Brickner decided that it *was* different. "When I called my friend back he seemed to understand but, in talking, he threw me into a turmoil a second time, asking how I would feel if Hussein overwhelmed the guerrillas. Ouch." Rabbi Brickner did not explain why the prospect of the PLO's defeat threw him into such a turmoil.

† Mrs. Isaac's own sympathies, to judge from other of her published writings, would appear to tend toward the position of the Land of Israel movement, but her pamphlet on Breira is free of any overt bias and is scrupulous in its respect for evidence and in its use of documentation. Mrs. Isaac is also the author of a useful and well-argued book, *Israel Divided: Ideological Politics in the Jewish State;* see my review in the September 1976 COMMENTARY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Waskow, a senior fellow at the Institute and now (as noted) a member of Breira's executive committee, once headed a project on "The Crisis of American Jewry" (which resulted in the publication of a book, *The Bush is Burning!*, containing organizational guidelines and descriptions of the various radical Jewish groups with which Waskow was then involved) and he currently runs an IPS project investigating the "triangular relationship among the U.S. government, the Israeli government, and the organized Jewish community inside the United States." Waskow's own views regarding this "interaction" are hardly positive. In an article for *Response* magazine in 1971, he argued that the "Zionism" of established Jewish organizations "is no devotion to the dream of Zion, but a snivelly admiration for Dayan, for jet-planes, for the Johnson or Nixon or Agnew who will deliver them." In that same article, he urged the American Jewish community to shift "its moral, political, and financial support" to dissident Israeli groups such as Siach (the Israeli New Left). Breira's "project of concern" bears a striking similarity to Waskow's current project at IPS.

According to Mrs. Isaac, the Institute for Policy Studies has a number of anti-Israel activists on its paid staff. Joe Stork, a member of the "collective" that produces *MERIP Reports*, is one such staff member. MERIP, which was founded in 1971, identifies openly with the PLO, and distributes its literature, its posters, and even its flags. When terrorists gunned down Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics, MERIP issued a flyer reading, "Munich and similar actions cannot create or substitute for a mass revolutionary movement, but we should comprehend the achievement of the Munich action. . . . It has provided a boost in morale among Palestinians in the camps. . . . It is regrettable when people are killed, Israeli or Palestinian or Lebanese or Syrian, but at the very least we should know where to put the blame." (On Israel.) In 1974, *MERIP Reports* printed "Zionism and American Jews," a speech given by MERIP's Sharon Rose to the 1973 convention of Arab-American University Graduates, a group described by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith as "the key PLO 'connection' in the United States." Sharon Rose addressed herself to the question, "How did Zionism move from a tiny force to being accepted by most Americans as the equivalent of Judaism and what are the perceptible cracks in the political hegemony of the Zionist movement and what forces are likely to widen them?" An earlier essay by Miss Rose, included in Waskow's book, *The Bush Is Burning!*, called for a "bi-national, democratic secular state, encompassing the entire area of the original Mandate"—which of course is exactly the PLO euphemism for the dissolution of the state of Israel—to carry out the necessary "revolution" in the Middle East.

In 1971, at the Institute for Policy Studies, Mrs. Isaac reports, MERIP conducted a discussion on "How American Radicals See the Resistance Dilemma"; its proceedings were subsequently published in 1972 in the PLO's *Journal of Palestine Studies*. At the conclusion of the discussion, Barry Rubin, a member of the MERIP "collective," called for a specifically Jewish anti-Zionist organization. "I think it would be good to have Jews campaigning actively for Palestinian needs," he said. "It immediately breaks up the myth combining Judaism and Zionism. In that case it's something that probably Jews can be much more effective in doing." After August 1974, Rubin's name no longer appeared in *MERIP Reports*, but in September 1975, when the first issue of the Breira newsletter *interChange* came out, Barry Rubin was listed as associate editor for international affairs. *InterChange* identified him as a doctoral candidate at Georgetown University but neglected to cite either his association with MERIP or with the violently anti-Israel Maoist *Guardian*.

CONAME, the other organization in the background of Breira, was established in 1970. Its sponsors included such recent supporters and activists of the New Left as Marcus Raskin, Richard Barnet, Barbara Bick, and Arthur Waskow, all from the Institute for Policy Studies, as well as I. F. Stone, William Kunstler, Staughton Lynd, and Howard Zinn. Peter Weiss, chairman of the Institute's Board of Trustees (and vice president of the Samuel Rubin Foundation, one of the Institute's—and now Breira's—main financial supporters), was a member of CONAME's steering committee along with other New Left notables like Paul Jacobs, Noam Chomsky, and Irene Gendzier (among others). Unlike MERIP, CONAME did not call for the destruction of Israel—though it sponsored speaking tours for such Israelis as Arie Bober and Israel Shahak, who did. Rather, CONAME argued that a Palestinian state must be established alongside Israel and that the PLO must be recognized by the United States and brought to Geneva.

On October 25, 1973 nineteen Arab-American or pro-Arab groups, among them CONAME, sent a telegram to members of the House and Senate urging "absolutely no arms and advisers to Israel." In December 1973, "in response to various requests from those wishing to become more active in the struggle against Zionism," the Middle East Coordinating Committee, a well-known pro-Arab group, issued a "partial list of groups and organizations in the New York area who are actively working on behalf of justice in the Middle East." CONAME was on the list. *Time* magazine (June 23, 1975) listed CONAME among the "some 20 organizations" that were "carrying the Arabs' message."

Breira, Mrs. Isaac proceeds to show, is lineally descended from CONAME. Loeb and Ruskay came directly out of CONAME into Breira; indeed, they seem to have helped set up Breira while they were still working for CONAME. (When, in April

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1976, CONAME merged with the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Alan Solomonow, CONAME's executive director, cited Breira as an organization continuing CONAME's work.) Presumably, they felt, like Barry Rubin, that a specifically Jewish organization actively campaigning on behalf of "Palestinian needs" would be more effective than a non-Jewish one. CONAME and Breira shared an identical position on the PLO and the need for a Palestinian state, but Breira was carefully designed to make its appeal to the Jewish community rather than to the "peace community."

Loeb and Ruskay did not build Breira by themselves; Arthur Waskow, in a 1976 *Response* symposium, revealed that he had "helped to build" Breira—and Mrs. Isaac demonstrates that "the old Waskow circle" consisting of veterans of many of his organizations, "provided a wealth of recruits" to Breira. Waskow was also discreetly involved with MERIP, sharing a Washington post-office box with that organization. In all his complex involvements with MERIP, CONAME, and Breira, Waskow has of course continued to be funded by the Institute for Policy Studies which, in addition to its indirect sponsorship of MERIP and CONAME, has undertaken to introduce PLO representatives into the mainstream of American life.*

If individuals such as Loeb, Ruskay, and Waskow were marginal elements in Breira, it could be argued that their views and past activities are not a matter of serious concern. Unfortunately, Mrs. Isaac maintains, they are among its central figures, and it is they, rather than any of the rabbis and intellectuals listed on the organization's masthead, who make its policy. A certain deception is thus being practiced, Mrs. Isaac concludes. Loeb, Ruskay, Waskow, and Rubin claim to be "Zionists" and sail under the colors of an organization that professes love for Israel, yet all of them have been identified with markedly anti-Israel organizations in the past, and none has repudiated that connection. In October 1973, while Israel's survival literally hung in the balance, their "concern" for Israel was such that they opposed emergency military aid. Since then, Mrs. Isaac asserts, they have built Breira into a front group, enlisting the good names and reputations of well-meaning rabbis and liberal Jewish intellectuals, but all the while working to advance the interests of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

EVEN before Mrs. Isaac's pamphlet appeared there were signs of friction within Breira over the activities of its full-time staff. At least a few of those whose names were listed on Breira's masthead had begun to feel they were being used, in effect, as window-dressing. One such person was Rabbi Joachim Prinz, a well-known Zionist and former president of the American Jewish Congress, and one of Breira's "stars," who in June 1975 sent a letter of objection to Loeb about a statement denouncing Israeli foreign policy which Breira was planning to issue at a press conference. Rabbi Prinz complained: "The Advisory Committee, of which I am a member, has never met [!], and so decisions are left to you and Arthur [Waskow], after some superficial consultations with one of us or with none of us." (At the time Waskow was nowhere even listed as a key figure in Breira.) Rabbi Prinz subsequently resigned from the organization, but it was some time before his name, and thus the appearance of his endorsement of Breira, was removed from its stationery.

In recent months, controversy over Breira has intensified both inside and outside the organization. A number of prominent people who had joined or supported the group have resigned—notably Nathan Glazer and Jacob Neusner†—and others who had contemplated joining are reported to have had second thoughts on the matter. (No doubt some have also been drawn to Breira precisely because of the adverse publicity.) One newspaper, the *Jewish Week,* has waged a lengthy out-and-out campaign of denunciation against Breira, but has also opened its pages to rebuttals by Loeb and others. As for the established Jewish organizations, their reaction to Breira and to the controversy surrounding it has ranged all the way from alarm—one or two agencies have enjoined members of their own staff from publicly espousing positions contrary to those officially adopted by the organizations employing them—to diplomatic silence. And as a consequence of all the charges and countercharges, Breira itself, at its national conference held in late February, released a series of platform resolutions which clearly reflect a moderating tendency on a number of key issues and a desire to create as broad a base as possible

* An IPS internal memo, sent on February 11, 1976 by IPS staffer Saul Landau to Samuel Rubin, one of the Institute's financial "angels," proposed a series of discussions among friendly members of Congress, such as James Abourezk and Anthony J. Moffett, members of the PLO United Nations delegation, "Israeli doves," and, finally, a "Breira representative, IPS people [and] Arab Americans not in Congress."

† Neusner, a professor of Jewish studies at Brown University and one of Breira's early members, has written recently that he joined the organization hoping it would provide a forum for the free discussion of the whole spectrum of issues facing American Jewry and contribute some "important and serious thought on the definition of Zionism and the tasks of Zionism in the [Diaspora]." But, he says, it has done nothing of the kind. Instead, "Breira is an organization with a single obsession, which is not Zionism, not peace in the Middle East, not any of the great issues of that world—but the West Bank and the evils of Jewish settlement thereon. Its principal interest is to tell the Israelis what to do in connection with what is (alas) only one of the many aspects of policy they have to work out." Another early member of the organization who has subsequently disaffiliated himself, Alan Mintz, says in a recent article that he missed in Breira any unequivocal expression of *"ahavat Yisrael,* unconditional love for the Jewish people"; following Israel's setbacks in the Yom Kippur War, Mintz notes, the mood in Breira "can only be described as jubilant."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by clinging to the lowest common ideological denominator its members can agree upon.

It remains to be seen whether, in the effort to broaden its appeal—which will mean, and has already meant, issuing strong declarations of support for a secure Israel, endorsing *aliyah*, and, above all, muting the preoccupation with the PLO—Breira will dilute itself out of fashion. But whatever the future shape of the organization, the significance of Breira as a phenomenon transcends the particular issues it finds to concentrate upon, and in the end it is the phenomenon itself which remains to be understood.

BREIRA came into existence and has gained strength and adherents during a period when the political fortunes of the state of Israel have reached perhaps an all-time low. Before 1973 Israel was, to be sure, isolated in its immediate geographical vicinity and surrounded by enemies sworn to its physical destruction. Since 1973, however, Israel has become increasingly isolated in the world as a whole, shunned even by many of its former friends and treated as a pariah by the community of nations. The reasons for Israel's new and more complete isolation are of course in the first instance political, having to do with the need to insure the supply of oil from Arab countries to the West. But what political considerations demand, moral considerations have come to justify. Hand in hand with the withdrawal of political support for Israel on the part of a dependent and weakened West has gone a withdrawal of sympathy, of moral support. The campaign of vilification against the Jewish state, initiated by the Arabs and the Soviet Union, and participated in enthusiastically by many Third World nations, has met with only token opposition from Israel's friends and allies.

The resolution of the UN General Assembly equating Zionism with racism, the ceaseless accusations that Israel is an outpost of imperialism in the Middle East, a "white" colonial power bent on thwarting the legitimate national aspirations of a people whose land it took away by force—these lies and others like them may or may not be accepted in their entirety in the West, but less and less is anyone inclined to refute them. It has increasingly come to be accepted as true that the fundamental cause of justice in the Middle East is on the side of the Arabs, the fundamental cause of injustice on the side of Israel; indeed, a serious question has been raised as to the very legitimacy of Israel, its right to exist.

Now, this idea—that Israel is the source of the problem in the Middle East—has not only come to inform the political thinking of Western governments intent on wringing concessions from Israel in order to placate Arab oil-producing nations, but it has also come to permeate public opinion as well—progressive opinion, enlightened opinion, *liberal* opinion. With the success of the worldwide campaign against Israel's legitimacy, liberal support for Israel can no longer be taken for granted—certainly not in Europe, and not even in the United States. And if liberal support cannot be taken for granted, the once-solid front of American Jewry is also beginning to show serious signs of a split. If the economic and geopolitical interests of the United States in the Middle East and the interests of Israel should diverge further, that split may become more pronounced.

Breira is a symptom of that split, a vivid demonstration of the inroads made into the American Jewish consciousness by the campaign to delegitimize Israel. In its monthly newsletter, in its public pronouncements, even in the newly "even-handed" resolutions passed at its national conference, Breira tacitly and often not so tacitly endorses the idea that the "problem" in the Middle East is not the decades-old Arab refusal to recognize and make peace with Israel, but rather Israeli "intransigence."

One might expect to find, in the publications of a group nominally supportive of Israel, the utmost skepticism concerning Arab intentions toward the Jewish state, yet in Breira's publications it is not the Arabs but the Israelis who are always and willfully assumed guilty until proved innocent—guilty of mistreating their Arab minority and brutalizing the Arabs in the occupied territories, guilty of expansionism, guilty of military vainglory and arrogance, guilty of economic exploitation, guilty, in short, of imperialism and racism.

The Arab nations, on the other hand, are assumed in these same writings to be, if not quite innocent, then certainly well-intentioned. Breira spokesmen have made a positive habit of attributing to Arab leaders a burning desire for peace that the Arabs themselves would be surprised to learn they possessed—certainly one they have never bothered to express publicly in anything but the vaguest and most hedged-about terms. Yet to judge from Breira literature, some Arab countries have *already* recognized Israel, while others are just waiting for the chance to be allowed to follow suit. Thus, according to a resolution adopted at the national conference for which no documentation was provided, "certain Arab countries and Palestinian leaders are willing to recognize Israel's right to exist." Arthur Waskow in his Op-Ed piece in the *Times* stated as fact that the PLO leadership was ready to accept the legitimacy of Israel, and was only restrained from doing so publicly for fear of reprisals by hardliners inside the terrorist organization. The PLO itself, of course, has repeatedly taken pains to assure the world that it continues to adhere rigidly to the Palestine National Covenant calling for Israel's elimination.

THE effect of these and other such denials of the reality of the Arab-Israeli confrontation is to place the moral burden of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

proof on one side only, and the weaker side to boot. This, to say the least, is a peculiar position for a "Zionist" organization to assume. Is Breira, then, "anti-Israel"? There is no doubt that there are some associated with the organization who can be objectively so described, for it would be impossible otherwise to explain their preoccupation with a terrorist organization whose first principle is the dismantling of the state of Israel. Even if one's main concern in the Middle East were the fate of the Palestinians, and one's main hope the satisfaction of their aspirations to national self-determination, one would hardly need to insist, as Loeb and Waskow and others in Breira have done, that these aspirations can be satisfied through the PLO and the PLO alone—especially when even a number of *Arab* leaders, including President Sadat of Egypt, have suggested such alternate non-PLO solutions to the Palestinian problem as a co-federation with Jordan (not to mention other solutions proposed by Israel and the friends of Israel). But so fixated on the PLO is this faction within Breira that it continues to insist on the centrality of that organization at a time when the PLO has been decimated in size and influence by the power politics, and the bullets, of its Arab "brothers," and when many observers are coming to believe that, to quote a recent report in the New York *Times*, the PLO's role in Middle East history may "be at an end."

In addition to its pro-PLO faction, however, Breira is made up of rabbis and liberal Jewish intellectuals and academics who may well form a majority, and who are far from being "anti-Israel" in any simple sense of the term. Yet these people too have lent their support and prestige to a movement that seeks to "solve" the Middle East conflict by placing the burden of proof on Israel. One might speculate endlessly about the motives of these Jewish men and women. Liberal guilt, a desire to be on the side of "liberation" and "progress," a weariness at having to uphold Israel's cause when that cause has gone out of odor or has come to seem hopeless, even an unconscious and paradoxical wish to be, for once, on the side their own government may be leaning toward —whatever the particular impulse, it is clear that, as they do not in fact wish Israel harm, they must find convincing reason to advocate the course they do, and persuade themselves that following it will lead away from danger and toward peace. It is here that the reassuring notion comes to hand—a notion invented by necessity if ever one was—that the Arabs themselves are ready and willing to make peace with Israel and have already said as much if one only succeeds in interpreting their words properly.

That in addition to mere wishful thinking there is a hint of unconscious racism in this last idea cannot be discounted altogether; Breira's pronouncements are in general characterized by an appallingly patronizing attitude toward the Arabs, a refusal to take them or anything they say seriously. But as Rael Isaac points out, what strikes the observer above all in such mental maneuvers is the unspoken desire, born, perhaps, of the feeling that Israel has become an intolerable burden, to distance oneself as a Jew from Israel's fate. Because this desire cannot be confronted honestly, reality is denied or redefined, one's intentions become cloaked in the language of moral rectitude, and a conviction takes hold that the "solution" to Israel's dilemma is both simple and at hand.

But the motives and intentions of the sundry and various elements in Breira are one thing, the ends the organization serves, whether it wishes to or not, are another. In spite of its recent protestations to the contrary, what Breira has primarily managed to do is to lend a seal of Jewish approval to the idea that the party at "fault" in the Middle East is not the 100 million Arabs who vowed once to throw Israel into the sea and now, after thirty years, actually stand within hailing distance of achieving that aim, but the 3 million Israelis, who for thirty years have sued for nothing but the opportunity to live among their neighbors in peace. Breira furnishes an "address," inside the Jewish community, to which anyone in government or in the world of public opinion may appeal who is seeking to promote a policy of one-sided pressure on Israel and needs to overcome the opposition which American Jewry has heretofore offered to such action. As Mark Bruzonsky, a supporter of Breira, put it candidly and approvingly in a recent article, Breira's "hope is so to weaken American support for current Israeli policies as to force policy changes, by U.S. imposition if necessary." In other words, by breaking the united front of the Jewish community, Breira may contribute toward making it possible for the United States to impose terms on the Israelis from which everyone will benefit but the Israelis themselves, and they may pay dearly indeed.

BOTH Mrs. Isaac's pamphlet and the reaction of some established Jewish organizations to Breira have been characterized by the group's defenders as a "witch-hunt" and an attempt to suppress legitimate dissent within the Jewish community. The truth, however, is that far from being suppressed, Breira has attracted many members and financial supporters from the heart of the American Jewish "establishment" itself, including staff members of the major defense agencies and leaders of the rabbinate. Indeed, the whole issue of "dissent" is a bit disingenuous. Neither Breira nor its supporters have been notable in demanding that the Jewish Defense League (which may be thought of as Breira's counterpart on the Right) be given a fair hearing by the "establishment"—despite the fact that *this* dissenting organization has evoked much greater hostility than Breira has.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The reason for the hostility both to Breira and to the JDL is that the overwhelming majority of American Jews, and the organizations representing them, believe neither in the latent peaceful intentions of the PLO toward Israel nor in the annexationist policies advocated by the JDL. Accordingly, anyone espousing either of these positions must expect to be met with criticism and opposition. Considering that the literal survival of the state of Israel is at stake, it is not to be wondered at that the criticisms should sometimes be harsh and the opposition passionate.

As for the charge of smearing and witch-hunting, which has been leveled by (among others) Alexander Cockburn and James Ridgeway (writing in the *Village Voice*, March 7, 1977) and by Irving Howe in a letter to the *Jewish Week*: to describe as a witch-hunt the scrupulous documentation of the political history of individuals and groups undertaken by Rael Isaac is itself to perpetrate a smear. In addition, it might be pointed out that charges of witch-hunting and of conducting a smear campaign come with ill grace from the likes of Cockburn and Ridgeway, who do not hesitate to characterize the Jewish Defense League as "parafascist," and from Irving Howe, who has spoken of a "mixture of Stalinist and McCarthyite methods" [!] being brought to bear by the *Jewish Week* against Breira.

IN A recent article in the *Nation*, Arthur Waskow likened the role of Breira today to the role of the anti-war movement of the 60's. Just as the anti-war activists of the 60's, he wrote, initiated contacts with Hanoi and the Vietcong and so helped bring "peace" to Vietnam, so Breira has initiated and participated in meetings between representatives of the PLO and American Jews in the hopes of bringing about an end to conflict in the Middle East. Waskow chided American Jewish leaders, many of whom had opposed the American intervention in Vietnam, for not recognizing the parallelism of the two situations and for turning their backs on today's "peacemakers." He concluded:

> We know now that those who criticized the policy of the U.S. government in Vietnam were right. . . . Why is it so hard for the American Jewish leadership to learn this lesson from its own experience. . . ?

There are several interesting facets to this argument. One is that Waskow should so cavalierly overlook the fact that American Jews do not stand in relation to the government of Israel, which is after all the concerned party here, as they did in relation to their own government when it was a party to the conflict in Vietnam; they do not hold Israeli citizenship, and they have neither the rights nor the obligations thereof, the latter including emphatically the obligation to fight and perhaps to die for the decisions the Israeli government must make. But what is most arresting about the analogy Waskow draws is something else again. The proper term for the "peace" that was finally brought to Vietnam is not peace but, for the one side, victory, and, for the other side, defeat. The "peace" that came to South Vietnam—for which Waskow now takes credit in behalf of the anti-war movement of the 60's—was the peace of obliteration, the peace of the grave; the country called South Vietnam no longer exists.

This is, indeed, precisely the sort of "peace" which the Palestine Liberation Organization and, as the weight of all the evidence strongly suggests, every self-respecting Arab government in the Middle East have in mind to bring to Israel as well. To work knowingly for such a "peace," to lend one's support to those who work for it, may be easy to reconcile with an attitude of enmity toward Israel; it is not so easy to reconcile with any more positive emotion.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Science and Defense Policy

Jeffrey Marsh

THE 20th century has been called the age of the common man, but a more accurate appellation might be the age of the physicist. The modern world as we know it has been shaped in large part by the technological offspring of classical 19th-century physics: electrical power and light, radio and television, the airplane and the automobile. Further advances in man's ability to control his environment have sprung from the revolution in physics which began in the early 1900's with the birth of both the quantum theory and the theory of special relativity. The invention of new solid-state devices such as the transistor has miniaturized the size and multiplied the power of electronic computers to control the complex social, industrial, and military structures which characterize modern society. Most important of all, perhaps, has been the development of nuclear weapons so powerful that the desire to avoid their use has been the principal factor in keeping the world as peaceful as it has been for the past thirty years.

It is scarcely a coincidence, then, that we now have a President who likes to boast (albeit with some degree of exaggeration) of his qualifications in nuclear physics, as well as a Secretary of Defense who began his career as a gifted physicist and made major contributions to the evolution of the hydrogen bomb. The historical background which has led to this confluence of the world of the physicist and that of the man of affairs is described in some detail in two recent books. A biography of Edward Teller by Stanley A. Blumberg and Gwinn Owens* illustrates the intersection of these two worlds in the life of the man known as the father of the hydrogen bomb, whose position even within the world of physics has been drastically affected by his political attitudes. On the other hand, the new autobiography of the mathematician Stanislaw Ulam,† who has a claim at least to the title of attending obstetrician, shows a career which has not suffered any disapprobation despite the substantial fraction of it spent in making possible weapons of mass destruction.

The Teller biography, fundamentally concerned with dramatic controversies in which Teller has been involved for the past thirty years, makes only sketchy references to his scientific achievements *per se*. Ulam, by contrast, divides his attention among descriptions of his technical work in pure mathematics and applied research, musings on general problems of cognition and creativity, and discussions of academic life in all the varied surroundings he has experienced over the years. While he provides a host of fascinating vignettes of the many distinguished scientists and mathematicians he has known, the diffusion of interest somewhat weakens what might otherwise have been a unique description of the interaction of science and public affairs by a perceptive participant in both.

PERHAPS the most obvious demonstration of the social and political impact of physics lies in the evolution of the idea of physics as a career. Edward Teller was born in 1908 in Budapest to a comfortable, assimilated, middle-class Jewish family. Despite his evident early gift for mathematics and physics, his father insisted that he study chemical engineering to insure his future ability to earn a living; Ulam, who comes from Poland and is also of Jewish origin, relates a similar debate within his family over his interest in mathematics. These experiences parallel those of many other extremely gifted would-be physicists in the first third of the century. Physics was then a subject primarily of academic interest, and a large fraction of those who would eventually find fame as physicists began their formal academic training as engineering students. The list includes not only Albert Einstein, but also such notables as Paul Dirac, Eugene Wigner, and many others. For those of Jewish origin, the difficulties to be anticipated in making a career in physics were multiplied by the prevailing hostility toward Jews in academia. Ulam relates how he straightforwardly and early on accepted the fact that he would have to leave Poland, while Teller, whose family was deeply shaken by the short-lived Béla Kun revolution and the anti-Semitic backlash which followed, was encouraged by his father to set out for the more hospitable climate of Weimar Germany. (The situation in American universities was not much better.)

In the late 20's, physics was passing through the most exciting epoch of its history: the quantum concept, originated twenty years earlier by Max Planck and Einstein and brought to bear on the problems of atomic structure by Niels Bohr, had evolved into the immensely successful theory of quantum mechanics, and new formalisms developed by Schrödinger, Heisenberg, and Dirac were enabling a host of hitherto intractable problems to be solved. With this intellectual ferment came the opportunity for the exceptionally gifted to advance rapidly to the top of the still small world of physics. The three dominant centers of attraction were Göttingen, Copenhagen, and Cam-

JEFFREY MARSH *is a consultant on energy economics. Mr. Marsh writes frequently on scientific matters in* COMMENTARY.

* *Energy and Conflict: The Life and Times of Edward Teller*, Putnam, 492 pp., $12.95.

† *Adventures of a Mathematician*, Scribners, 317 pp., $14.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bridge, and the most able of the new generation of physicists moved in individual orbits among the different centers before going on to spread the gospel throughout the academic world. While the scientific world was in a state of creative flux, the world at large, and Europe in particular, was emerging from the ebullient 20's into the Great Depression. The subsequent coming to power of Adolf Hitler in Germany gave a new direction to the wandering of those itinerant physicists who were Jewish, left-wing, or (as many were) both.

Even while the Depression continued, farseeing American and British institutions began opening their facilities to the best of the academic refugees. Einstein, after transatlantic and transcontinental competition, came to Princeton; John Von Neumann, Enrico Fermi, Hans Bethe, and a host of others also ended up in America. Ulam took a variety of temporary positions and was a Harvard Junior Fellow before obtaining a permanent post at Wisconsin (for which he was recommended by the leading American mathematician of the era, G. D. Birkhoff of Harvard, otherwise well known for his generally anti-Semitic proclivities). Edward Teller, at the age of twenty-six, became a full professor at George Washington University. With all this movement, the United States was taking giant steps toward world leadership in physics. The displaced Europeans served an invaluable role in transferring the tradition of excellence, while a new generation of American-born physicists who had broadened their education in the European centers vitalized physics departments across the country Of these Americans, among the most notable was the brilliant theorist and polymath, J. Robert Oppenheimer.

The Europeans were of necessity keenly attuned to what was going on in the world of politics; by the late 30's, even the most remote of the ivory-tower American physicists (at least those who were Jewish) could not fail to be aware of the atmosphere of impending catastrophe. Oppenheimer emerged from his cocoon of political ignorance and entered the world of naive fellow-traveling, contributing his name and considerable capability for financial support to a host of Communist and Communist-front organizations. Despite the menacing political atmosphere, however, the physicists had a heady intellectual life, described with verve both by Blumberg and Owens and by Ulam.

THE rapidly advancing knowledge of nuclear physics in the 30's was capped by the discovery of artificially induced nuclear fission just as the war broke out. The implications were evident to physicists as soon as they heard of it; Leo Szilard and Eugene Wigner were instrumental in persuading Einstein to write his famous letter to President Roosevelt and, together with the results emerging from the rapidly advancing nuclear-research program in Great Britain, enough momentum was generated for the initiation of the Manhattan Project. Physicists from all over the country were whisked off to a remote corner of New Mexico, where the new Los Alamos laboratory was established to design and fabricate the first atom bomb under the direction of Oppenheimer.

Teller was also present, but his intensely individualistic nature chafed under the rigidly goal-oriented discipline of Los Alamos. Once the theoretical feasibility of constructing a fission weapon had been demonstrated, he lost interest, and personality clashes led to his being put in charge of a side project of his own, the intellectually more challenging but then practically irrelevant task of studying the possibility of a weapon based on the fusion of hydrogen rather than the fission of uranium. Oppenheimer had his own personal difficulties. Unknown to the Los Alamos staff, he was under the constant surveillance of intelligence officers aware of his political past and unpersuaded of his current loyalty. On one occasion, he was contacted indirectly by a Soviet agent seeking information. While he instantly rejected the overture, he failed to report it to the security authorities for six months (a delay which was to figure importantly in the hearing over his security clearance ten years later).

BY July 1945, Germany had surrendered and the war was drawing to a close. The physicists were thus able to moderate their single-minded concentration, while the feverish pace of actual work on the bomb continued, and to devote some attention to the question of what its place should be in the postwar world and, more immediately, whether it should actually be used against Japan. Those most actively concerned with these political issues were working at the University of Chicago, from where Szilard circulated a petition suggesting that the bomb not be dropped without first issuing a warning. Teller discussed the matter with Oppenheimer, and concluded that the decision regarding use of the bomb was best left to the political process. In a letter to Szilard, he expressed his belief that an informed public opinion should play the key role in formulating the decision, and toward this end he advocated widespread knowledge concerning the nature and effect of nuclear weapons. Subsequently Teller would, if anything, strengthen this opinion, while also deciding that he should have signed the petition and worked as hard as possible to prevent the use of the bomb on Japan without prior warning.

With the dropping of the bomb at the end of the war, the prestige of physicists in general reached a new height. Oppenheimer achieved a degree of public eminence as well as unparalleled influence in government. Together with Isidor I. Rabi, he was instrumental in drafting the Baruch plan for the internationalization of atomic energy, which was torpedoed by Soviet opposition. The pace of weapons research at Los Alamos, however, greatly slackened, as a large fraction of the wartime staff left to resume their interrupted careers. One exception was Ulam, who briefly took a post at the University of Southern California, only to be stricken by a mysterious brain disease; following his recuperation he joined the permanent staff of Los Alamos where he remained until 1967. As for Teller, when the new director of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Los Alamos, Norris Bradbury, failed to press hard for more research on fusion, he left for the University of Chicago. Teller had in mind not only the possibility of constructing a so-called fission-fusion-fission weapon, which would use an initial atomic explosion to induce a fusion reaction that would in turn produce a greatly intensified fission reaction, but a superbomb, in which a preliminary fission explosion would induce a fusion reaction with no theoretical limit to its explosive power. The political atmosphere of the time, however, was decidedly hostile to any attempt to expand defense expenditures in a recently demobilized economy.

THEN, in 1949, at the height of the cold war, the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb, and support began to be rallied for a superbomb program in the U.S. Teller's own effort in behalf of this program was concentrated in the departments of State and Defense and in the congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. The Atomic Energy Commission, meanwhile, under the chairmanship of David Lilienthal, asked for the opinion of its General Advisory Committee, headed by Oppenheimer. This committee recommended an expansion of the effort at Los Alamos to produce a diversity of fission weapons but argued against production of a fusion superbomb.

The AEC accepted the recommendations of the report, but President Truman decided finally to proceed with development of the hydrogen superbomb. When the Korean war broke out in 1950, congressional opposition to increasing defense expenditures evaporated, and resources were available not only to proceed with that bomb but also to expand the other nuclear-weapons programs which the GAC had regarded as alternatives.

Until mid-1951, however, very little progress was made on the superbomb, and many had begun to doubt that it could be built at all. The calculations performed on the suggested designs all pointed in the direction of failure. Then one day Ulam made a conceptual breakthrough on the fundamental configuration and told Teller of his radical new idea. Teller grasped the idea immediately, thought of an equivalent and even superior configuration, and the superbomb was born. The new design was tested experimentally in 1952 and a practical version was built for the next round of tests in 1954. The time from the decision to go ahead to the first actual explosion of a device was four years. The Soviets' first superbomb explosion took place in 1955.

Ironically, by the time the detailed design and construction of the H-bomb were being accomplished, Teller himself was no longer associated with Los Alamos. He had long been dissatisfied with the pace and direction of the research program there, and his alliance with the California physicists E. O. Lawrence and Luis Alvarez in the fight over the H-bomb decision had extended to their struggle to set up a new weapons laboratory at Livermore in the Berkeley-San Francisco area. Teller joined the Livermore staff, initially headed by Herbert F. York, in 1952.*

While by the middle 50's the weapons laboratories had settled into a kind of normality, a major storm had blown up on the political front. Since the decision to proceed with the superbomb, Oppenheimer's star had waned in Washington. No longer chairman of the General Advisory Committee, he remained only a consultant to the Atomic Energy Commission, with his contract soon due to lapse. His opponents, however, were not willing to let sleeping dogs lie. Using their knowledge of his past, which had been thoroughly investigated in 1947, they were instrumental in having his security clearance suspended; at a formal hearing called after President Eisenhower's intervention in the case, the commissioners of the AEC decided that there was sufficient doubt as to his discretion to warrant removal of the clearance altogether.

Teller's testimony played an important part in the hearing. While he avowed his belief in Oppenheimer's loyalty, when asked if he believed that Oppenheimer was a security risk he replied in an unfortunate phrase, "I would feel personally more secure if public matters would lie in other hands"—an assessment based on his differing perception of what policies were called for in the public interest, but one made in terms difficult to reconcile with the technical nature of a security clearance. By addressing himself to the issue of Oppenheimer's judgment, Teller brought down on himself the wrath of a substantial part of the scientific community, while Oppenheimer became a martyr.

Despite his widespread unpopularity, Teller did remain influential in the counsels of the nuclear-weapons establishment. He found a vocal supporter in the person of Nelson Rockefeller, whose ardent advocacy of civil-defense measures was due in no small part to Teller. He also retained substantial influence in the Defense Department and the armed services. To the public, he was a Doctor Strangelove figure, not least because of his strong support for continued weapons testing and his unrestrained opposition to the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963. Yet the fact that this treaty was only partial, and excluded underground tests, can be laid in great part to the urging of Teller not to allow the Soviets an opportunity to proceed with secret tests while the U.S., because of the open nature of its political system, would be constrained by the forms of a treaty.

WHILE the rise and fall of figures like Teller and Oppenheimer command public attention, Ulam's experience is perhaps more typical of the insider who stays near the center of the establishment but escapes prominence. From 1957 on, Ulam occupied a policy-making role in the Los Alamos administration, and also served on a host of defense- and space-oriented committees in Washington. Since his

* In the late 60's, York became a leading member of the arms-control community, adopting a semi-revisionist position and advocating a much less aggressive nuclear-weapons policy. In his own recent book, *The Advisors: Oppenheimer, Teller, and the Superbomb* (Freeman), York not only describes the evolution of the U.S. superbomb program, but also attempts to describe what might have happened had the decision gone the other way.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

major interest remained mathematical research, he left Los Alamos in 1967 to return to academic life at the University of Colorado in Boulder; he can now be described as an elder statesman of science.

BY THE end of the 60's, in any case, the public adulation which had once been the lot of scientists had become only a memory. The worldly-wise physicists found themselves under savage attack from the New Left, their sophisticated contributions to the national defense dismissed as complicity in an immoral system. Though the passions unleashed by the Vietnam war lasted only a few years, the self-assurance of the physics establishment was shaken badly, and has yet to recover. At the same time, a slackening economy has caused drastic cutbacks in government research funding, and there is in addition a growing mood of public disenchantment with the scientific enterprise in general. Even the widespread concern over secure energy supplies, which might have been expected to generate a new national commitment to physics research, has not brought physics back to the position it enjoyed in the early 60's.

Ironically, one factor in the cutoff of government support to the physics establishment is the outspoken opposition of some physicists themselves to American defense policy. The emasculation of the U.S. ABM program, which led of necessity to the anti-ABM treaty of 1972, was in some measure the result of such lobbying by the scientists. Indeed, a revisionist school of arms-control historians now maintains that American development of the hydrogen bomb in the early 50's was itself the first unnecessary step in a nuclear-arms race which is only now beginning to be curbed. American public opinion, however, continues to be more skeptical than this about the wisdom of a reduced defense budget, and particularly about the pacific intentions of the Soviet Union. Depending on future developments in the international political arena, Edward Teller's historical reputation is still an open question.

Fiction

In Praise of Chaim Grade

Ruth R. Wisse

YIDDISH literature, which flowered a century ago in Eastern Europe as an impulse of modernization, has now become largely commemorative, bearing favorable testimony to the world of traditional feeling and practice which Yiddish writers once rejected and sought to reform. This change is not simply a matter of nostalgia for the irretrievable past, but the result of a distinct inversion of values. Western modernity once held out to the Yiddish writer perspectives of individual freedom and a richness of spirit not to be found within the constraints of the Pale of Settlement or the code of Jewish law; yet that same constrained past, seen from this side of the Holocaust, now appears to offer a compelling image of a relatively hopeful, morally robust, and genuinely *better* world. To write of East European Jewry is thus today a means not of expressing but of repudiating a tragic vision of mankind.

The work of Chaim Grade, one of the finest contemporary Yiddish writers, is a powerful instance of this altered view. Grade's literary career, begun in the early 1930's in a painful struggle against the generation of his parents and teachers, became in the postwar years a growing monument to that generation, and even to some of the personalities that once aroused his bitter opposition. His single most ambitious work, *The Yeshiva*,* the first part of which has now been published in English translation, returns to the obsessive subject of Grade's best poetry and prose—his years in the yeshivas of Vilna, Valkenik, Bielsk, and Bialystok. But the atmosphere that was once represented in Grade's work as harshly oppressive now appears almost luminous and bracingly fresh. One is moved to wonder, given the literary parallels, what James Joyce might have done with the Jesuits at Clongowes had they been reduced to crematorium ash, and he left to haunt the fervent halls of his youth.

Among the many outstanding Yiddish writers who came to adolescence in Vilna before World War II, Grade was the only one thoroughly trained in talmudic and rabbinic sources. His mother, a widow who supported her family by peddling fruit in the marketplace, entrusted him for a time to a progressive children's home, but in his teens Grade attended one yeshiva after another, where he came under the decisive influence of the *mussarists*, followers of Rabbi Israel Salanter.

The *mussar* movement developed in response to two perceived dangers: on the one hand, the threat of the Haskalah, or Enlightenment, that was weaning Jews from religious observance; on the other hand, the stultification of Jewish religious experience, which was hardening into ritualism. In the Lithuanian academies, *mussar* challenged what it felt to be the exclusive emphasis on erudition, striving instead for the development of a moral religious personality. To train students in right feeling as well as right practice, the schools of *mussar* supplemented the regular yeshiva curriculum with studies of ethical literature, group counseling and analysis, and close personal supervision. Grade was

RUTH R. WISSE *teaches Yiddish literature at McGill University in Montreal and is the author of* The Schlemiel as Modern Hero *and the editor of* A Shtetl and Other Yiddish Novellas.

* Translated by Curt Leviant, Bobbs-Merrill, 387 pp., $12.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trained in *mussar*'s most extreme ascetic form: the years he spent trying to uproot the *yetser hara*, his "evil inclination," left their mark on his personality, setting him apart from his contemporaries even in later years when he appeared to have firmly joined the secular world. "Whoever has learned *mussar* can have no enjoyment in life," says more than one character in Grade's fiction.

As a still forward-looking young man of twenty-two, Grade broke off his religious studies, started writing poetry, and soon became part of the literary coterie known as *Yung Vilna*, a lively, talented group of writers and painters who lived within a radius of a few city streets and shared ambitions of artistic greatness. The same cultural energy that had once made Vilna the center of rabbinic learning and won for it the title "Jerusalem of Lithuania" was manifest in the 1930's in an extended network of Yiddish and Hebrew schools, libraries, cultural institutions, publications, and political organizations —all the more extraordinary in a Jewish population of only 65,000. A natural outgrowth of this bustling culture, *Yung Vilna* was determined to "march into Yiddish literature" as its newest, most promising unit, with a special blend of modernism and rich Jewish distinctiveness.

The group was fortunate in the encouragement it received from local Yiddish dailies, publishers, and audiences, to whom it offered in return a wide variety of talent. Shmerke Kaczerginski, organizer of the group's public evenings, was a skilled reporter and publicist. Abraham Sutzkever (now living in Israel), possibly the most talented poet of the generation, invoked his Siberian childhood and the miracle of poetic creation in a lyricism of unfolding beauty and joy. The unpredictable Leyzer Wolf, alternately grotesque and tender, delighted in zany combinations of subjects and images. When he ran out of poems—he tried to break the world's record with 1,000 in a single month—he amused his colleagues with topical aphorisms: "Should all nations unite? Naturally. But it should happen naturally." But on the whole the group was serious about its social responsibilities, and soberly exacting in its artistic standards. Peretz Miransky experimented in poetic fables on the theme of social injustice; the poet Elkhonon Vogler wrote long pantheistic narratives; Shimshon Kahan, who was also an editor of the daily *Vilner Tog*, composed Yiddish versions of Gypsy songs which he studied and admired.

Small wonder that this circle, existing alongside the Vilna houses of prayer and study, should have proved fatally attractive to a young man with literary inclinations. Even the clear preference within the group for poetry over prose had its influence on the young Grade, who started out as a poet and did not turn to fiction until after the war.

Soon after his literary debut, Grade was caught up in the enthusiasms of the time. Though the Communist party was outlawed in Poland, Grade, like most of his literary colleagues, responded to what he saw as its social promise. His lyric with the rousing refrain, "Hey, Comrade Grade, Come on, enlist in the Red Brigade" (in Yiddish, *grah-de* and *bri-gah-de* are a perfect rhyme), and poems of a similar resonance were responsible for the impounding of the group's little magazine in 1936, and for the arrest of Kaczerginski, the editor. The group's ardor for Soviet socialism gradually cooled after the Moscow Trials of 1937. Grade, in those years of mounting unease, began to express his concern for the Jews in the face of swelling local and pan-European anti-Semitism. The title of his first book of poems, *Yo* ("Yes"), confirmed the affirmative dedication of his verse, which was now channelled to national themes. The poet, said Grade, "must learn from the prophets who in times of brazen impudence warned of impending danger, and in time of ruin, when all lay waste, foretold the resurrection of the dead."

Nevertheless, Grade's single most powerful work of the 1930's was neither prophetic nor an affirmation. *Mussarniks*, a long narrative poem of thinly-disguised autobiography, was Grade's first attempt to dramatize the conflicts that drove him from *mussar* but continued to claim the deepest regions of his mind and soul. In the poem Chaim Vilner, the author's fictional self, looks back from a distance of seven years to the autumn of 1930 when he felt himself torn between the punishing moral rectitude of Reb Aba, his fiery headmaster, and the attractions of secular books and ideas.

Reb Aba mocks, badgers, mortifies, and threatens his students to keep them away from worldliness and out of love with themselves. On the competing side are Chaim Vilner's youthful curiosity and the cynicism of a failed *mussarist*, Moyshe Liber. Liber—the loving name suggests the affectionate treatment he receives in the poem —would like to expel the poisonous spear of *mussar* from his heart, but it is too late; he can no longer enjoy the carefree pleasures of young lovers, the social idealism of the young workers, or the proud ambition of a young writer. He is caught "in a battle on narrow bridges," feverish in his contempt for the self-satisfied secularists who ignore the underbelly of evil, but sickened by the *mussarists* who have made him hate his body, his passions, any hopes he may have had for enjoyment or advancement.

Chaim Vilner argues against Liber's bitter indictment, yet in the final, symbolic section of the poem, when the Ark of the Torah in the *mussarist* synagogue threatens to topple, and Vilner would like to spring with his colleagues to its rescue, he finds himself riveted to his spot at the door, "a wounded man in a trench, blinded in a nocturnal forest beside an extinguished fire." Seven years after his departure, the *mussar* environment still evokes in the poet a mixture of sorrow, anger, and guilt.

Grade lived through the war in Russia, having made his escape from Vilna with the retreating Soviet forces in 1941. His mother, his wife, most of his literary and yeshiva friends were murdered; Jewish Vilna was utterly destroyed. Grade was left shouldering a mountainous guilt, as unyielding as it was irra-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tional. A book of poems dedicated to his dead wife, *With Your Body Upon My Hands,* inflicts as cruel a self-punishment on its author as one would wish the murderers to have suffered. Memories of his mother and of their teeming Vilna neighborhood stirred up yet wilder despair. Perhaps in the hope of finding a new artistic equilibrium, Grade turned to prose, for him an untried medium and one that appeared to offer both a lower level of intensity and a more relaxed pace.

•

FROM the perspective of Paris, where he began to reconstruct his postwar life, Grade returned to his struggle with *mussar.* "My Quarrel with Hersh Rasseyner"* is a singular story, the first to make Grade's reputation in English; it dramatizes the fortuitous reunion in the Paris metro of Chaim Vilner and his fellow *mussarist,* the antagonist of the story's title. Utterly free of the then-prevalent tendency toward romanticization, the story takes up the old argument with surprising acerbity as the two survivors, one now a well-known Yiddish writer, the other a *mussarist* teacher, oppose one another in unrelenting debate.

The brilliant confrontation between Jewish believer and Jewish secularist is heightened by the play of a third participating presence: time. The Holocaust, recognizing no distinction, has with crushing irony ravaged Vilner and Rasseyner alike. They, however, resist its undiscriminating reductivism. In their postwar meeting there is a softening of mutual antagonism, but no yielding on the basic issues of the relation of the Jew to his Law, to Western civilization, and to God; if anything, Rasseyner's years in the concentration camps and Vilner's years in refugee flight have sharpened and refined their original positions. There is in this story a remarkable exhilaration, deriving not only from the tension of the debate—which remains a draw—but from the combined victory of the debaters over time and circumstance. Paris falls away, even the massive destruction of European Jewry is pushed into the background, as the ongoing internal argument over the Jewish way of life resumes.

IT IS this same argument that Grade takes up again in *The Yeshiva,* the grandest of several novels he wrote after settling in America. While Grade has made his home in New York since 1948, his fiction remains firmly fixed in pre-war Poland, or that part of it that Jews continue to refer to as Lithuania. The novel in the Yiddish original, reworked from installments that had been appearing in Yiddish periodicals and newspapers since 1953, was published in two parts, *Tsemakh Atlas* (1967) and *Di Yeshiva* (1968), to great acclaim. A Hebrew translation proved equally popular in Israel. Grade is probably the only secular Yiddish writer read and appreciated by the Orthodox. The internal world of Jewish scholarship has not often been the subject of fiction, and Grade's skillful animation of certain classical arguments and issues both here and in such works as the dramatic novel, *The Agunah,* and in the final chapters of *The Well,* are appreciated even by those who do not always share his bias.

The Yeshiva, set in Poland in the 1920's, is a superabundant work, charged with a moral obsessiveness like Dostoevsky's and the bereaved lover's passion to record every remembered moment of the past. Grade goes straight to the heart of the matter, choosing for his protagonist the rigid *mussarist* headmaster, Reb Aba, here in the somewhat suppler form of Tsemakh Atlas. Observed over a long span of time and at close novelistic range, Tsemakh Atlas turns out to be an anxious brooder, oppressed by his lack of faith, the most serious affliction that can befall the traditional Jew. As long as he was risking his life under the Bolsheviks or smuggling young boys across the border to the transplanted *mussar* yeshivas of Poland, Tsemakh Atlas burned with active devotion. In the quieter atmosphere of daily study and worship, however, he turns restive, impatient with his own and others' imperfections, and prey to doubt.

His life is not made easier when he goes out to find a wife. He is lured into an engagement under false pretenses, and though he feels justified at the time in abandoning his fiancee, she compels his conscience years later. Tall, robust, with a forcible virility that sets him apart from other "bench-warmers," Tsemakh is attractive even to emancipated women. On a visit to his uncle and aunt, his closest living relatives, he captures the roving eye of Slava Stupel, a local heiress, who believes she can transfer Tsemakh's intense emotion to herself and modernize her *mussarist* husband by taking him into the family business. Their marriage of course is doomed. The *mussarist* rebels against every sign of false piety, every familial or local injustice. He can no sooner make his peace with a shopkeeper's fate than he can restrain his angry tongue. Tsemakh returns to *mussar* in penance. Leaving behind the wife who will neither join him nor accept a divorce, he sets up his own yeshiva in Valkenik, recruiting students from Vilna and the surrounding region. One new recruit is the author's familiar projection, Chaim Vilner.

From this point, the book goes off into many byways, with every minor figure introducing a subplot of his own, all with a similar tension: the harsh competition between passion and continence in the forging of human identity. There is a Vilna tobacco merchant, crazed by the memory of his second wife who has run off to Argentina; there are the warring factions of religious Zionists and religious anti-Zionists, whose politics are but a disguise for personal jealousy. Against the weakness of these, Tsemakh Atlas stands as the toughest soldier of the civilizing army—too tough, in the judgment of this book. Tsemakh's determination to uproot evil by force creates a web of hardship and resentment, and his attempt to will away temptation, humbling himself and others into submissiveness, ends only in misery, in ever deepening depression. Chaim Vilner turns from the punishing joylessness of *mussar* to a

* Translated by Milton Himmelfarb, COMMENTARY, November 1953. The story also appears in Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg, *A Treasury of Yiddish Stories.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

milder master, Reb Avraham-Shaye Kosover.

In the figure of the kindly, clever Reb Avraham-Shaye, Grade attempts to locate a healing synthesis between *mussar* repressiveness and self-indulgence, the man whom wholehearted faith protects from lust and inspires to fulfill his obligations. Like Tsemakh Atlas and so many of Grade's characters, Reb Avraham-Shaye is the fictional recreation of an actual personality, the "Khazon Ish," Avraham-Shaye Karelitz, with whom the author studied for a number of years. Though he held no official rabbinic post, the "Khazon Ish" was widely consulted in religious, communal, and personal matters, withstanding the intense factionalism of the times by his remarkable example of meticulous scholarship in the service of ordinary men and women. In the book, Grade puts into the mouth of this saintly man an indictment of extremism that he is no longer apparently willing to entrust to Chaim Vilner, the budding artist, or to any other secular critic of tradition. If *mussar* is to be repudiated, only the traditional Jew is worthy of pronouncing the judgment.

One might have expected Grade, working in the greater amplitude and leisure offered by the novel as a form, to develop his old subject in any number of new ways: against the reality of political events in interwar Poland; in relation to contemporary socioeconomic problems, specifically the drastic poverty that was making a special assault on the Jews; by exploration of the childhood and psychological background of some of the characters. Yet Grade undertakes none of these, instead restricting his canvas once again to the internal Jewish world, and within that to the ethical and moral dimensions of its religious culture. There is greater psychological depth in this work than in any of Grade's earlier prose, but even here he stays within his single context, probing underlying motives and subconscious desires—just as *mussar* does—not in the interests of an integrated personality but as part of the search for true moral perfection. Despite the more ambitious genre, the concentration is as exclusive as ever, and two familiar types still occupy center stage: Tsemakh Atlas, the *mussar* activist, and Chaim Vilner, in many ways his younger counterpart, equally lustful and stubborn by nature, at first unable and later unwilling to subjugate his feelings to his will.

Grade's major thematic innovation in *The Yeshiva* is Reb Avraham-Shaye, the man of seemingly effortless goodness and wisdom, who steps into the lives of the two main characters, and into the breach between them, bringing the same harmony he has achieved in himself. Unfortunately, though the modest sage is a particularly memorable figure, in his capacity of spiritual cornerstone he blunts some of the novel's force. Where *Mussarniks* and "My Quarrel with Hersh Rasseyner" bring conflict to a pitch and leave it suspended there, *The Yeshiva* attempts a wistful resolution that is dramatically unconvincing and historically dubious.

This becomes clearer, and correspondingly more problematic, in Volume II, now being translated for English publication, which concludes with the joint tribute of Tsemakh Atlas and Chaim Vilner to the lasting spiritual legacy of their mentor. It is as if Grade were suggesting that a truly wise man could not only resolve the perplexities of yeshiva students, but even find a way to pacify a process of personal, interpersonal, and communal upheaval that was begining to reach, in the period the novel describes, the proportions of a cultural earthquake. The influence of Reb Avraham-Shaye over the more compelling fictional personalities of Tsemakh Atlas and Chaim Vilner is not psychologically convincing. More importantly, the quickened pulse of one of the most fractious periods in Jewish history, which Grade brilliantly evokes, is artificially slowed by the presentation of the "good Jew" as an effective principle of conciliation.

It is clear from a comparison of Grade's several treatments of his subject over the years that he has grown more protective of the past with each successive work. A recently published narrative poem, *"Talmidey-khakhomim in der lite"* ("Jewish Scholars of Lithuania"), is well on the way to hagiography. In it, the author—as Chaim Vilner—recalls once more the summer he spent with his teacher in Valkenik, prefacing his description with lines of testimonial praise: "I am not flaunting my humility when I say . . . I was privileged to see his back." Here piety has quite replaced artistic independence as the moving impulse of narration.

Grade's greatness lies in confrontation. When the voices of husband and wife, father and son, teacher and pupil, Zionist and anti-Zionist, are raised in a flush of disputation, *The Yeshiva* grows charged with narrative energy that regenerates the past and brings it a rare immediacy. Grade's imagination—honed in talmudic dialectic, nurtured by the contradictions of his youthful environment and by the warring impulses within himself—finds its most satisfying expression in debate, the defiant clash of opposing convictions.

It is only when an understandable deference to the culture that produced him prompts Grade to wrap his characters in kindly resolution or proclaim their greatness as fact that his work loses its fire, becomes elegaic, and, rather than keeping the past alive, helps lay it softly to rest. At such moments Grade seems almost to have entered into a silent complicity with today's reader, for whom *all* of the East European experience—religious and secular, radical and Zionist, Yiddishist and Hebraist, and each of the contending factions in between—is likely to be bathed in the same historical glow, and to whom both those who accepted God and those who rejected Him now seem equally "pious." As a definitive corrective to just such leveling notions stands the work of Chaim Grade at its corrosive best. Indeed, there is probably nothing in literature that more vividly confirms the vanished culture of East European Jewry than the rhetorical splendor of Grade's intellectuals and marketwomen when they remain triumphantly unreconciled, fixed in attitudes of animated opinion.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Class Struggle on Broadway

Jack Richardson

SINCE the late 50's, the English theater has been staging contemporary studies in class warfare. Spokesmen for those whom Max Beerbohm called "the unmentioned by Debrett" have by now accustomed even American ears to the social tensions of U and non-U dialogue, to the comic anguish of a society in which a dropped "h" or a misplaced fish knife can erect impenetrable barriers between its citizens. Of course, beneath the surface conflict of accents and table settings, there lay a deeper social disjunction which the new dramatists attacked and exploited. The genteel sensibility of the upper classes, at least as it was depicted on the stage, became, for writers like Osborne, Wesker, Mortimer, and even Pinter, the target for an all-out dramatic assault. To them, a detached and reticent intercourse with life was not only a snobbish rebuff of democratic enthusiasms but also an obstacle to real dramatic passion, and they exulted in displaying the rude emotional vigor of their characters and in inflicting it on that fine distillation of manners by which the upper class lived and kept a safe distance from the rest of society. In his review of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger,* Kenneth Tynan expressed succinctly the social and critical attitude of this new movement when, after admitting some reservations about the play's artistic qualities, he chastised such disinterested judgments with the declaration that he doubted he could "love anyone who did not wish to see *Look Back in Anger.*"

Since Tynan pronounced this exile of millions from his affections, class warfare has settled into an honored theatrical tradition, so that many English playwrights now seem to feel obliged, in order to establish their depth of purpose and good intentions, to pay it homage, often at the cost of seriously injuring their individual work.

Comedians, by Trevor Griffiths, is an instance of such an injury. Starting from a premise that is novel and rich with antic possibility, the play manages to scuttle itself with perfunctory, self-righteous anger. Set in Manchester, *Comedians* begins with a group of young men who aspire to be night-club comics, meeting in one of those dismal cubicles of adult education. They have been for some time taking a course in the craft of comedy that a former celebrated comedian is giving in order to perpetuate his ideas on humor while he guides his students in their first efforts at a professional career. As the class assembles, it becomes clear that most of the young men are there in order to find some way to escape from their present Manchester existence rather than out of any particular calling for the craft they're studying. They all, however, share a certain mood of desperation, which makes their tired jokes and pat routines poignant pleas for freedom as well as hilarious exercises in show-business fundamentals.

There is one student, however, who we perceive has a genuine and personal comic imagination, whose humor, at least in the classroom, goes much deeper than that of his fellow students. Among those who are simply looking for a better way to earn a living, he stands out as a real artist, and as each of the students auditions his act at a local social club for a visiting talent scout with a safe, commercial sense of humor, we wait for this prize pupil to perform in a manner that will send his provincial audience back to bingo and *Comedians'* audience into several levels of appreciative laughter.

While waiting, one is treated to a variety of ways in which a comedian can endure an agonizing death on stage, and in each of the bumbling performances, Griffith manages to present not only the comedy of ineptitude, but also the true character of the performers. The failures are painful and funny, and one believes nothing can possibly go wrong in a work that seems so closely in tune with the lives and setting it depicts. But, alas, one's confidence is premature. The genius of the classroom comes on and proceeds to aspire to social significance. Wearing the make-up of a mime, he tries to make human contact with a pair of poshly dressed dummies that, naturally enough, remain indifferent to all his overtures of friendship and assumptions of common feeling. As he pushes his demands for some sort of acknowledgment from these upper-class effigies, his hostility mounts, and his crude cordiality changes into threatening anger. His act ends in harangue and homicide, a conclusion which, I suppose, informs one that comedy is a serious business.

After such a heavy intrusion of high purpose, it should be no surprise that the final act is mostly taken up with a fierce debate between pupil and teacher on the functions of comedy, a debate which manages to draw concentration camps and the problems of working-class solidarity into its arguments. It should also be no surprise that vitality and humor drain out of the play with each reference to the social obligations of comedy, and one can only remind oneself afterward how much of Griffith's drama deserved a fate better than this windy and hollow conclusion.

The cast, under Mike Nichols's direction, presents a tight ensemble performance filled with gritty details of character and setting. Jonathan Price, who plays the gifted young comic, is always in impeccable control of the bitter, ironic energy his character converts into humor until the playwright abandons him and he is forced to flounder manfully through the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rhetoric of the last act. It is odd that Mike Nichols, whose early career makes him no stranger to the profession *Comedians* is about, and Griffith, who obviously has been close to this world himself, should have forgotten that when a comic must fall back on a "seriously-now-folks" plea to his audience, his act is in serious trouble.

IN HIS earlier play, *Butley*, Simon Gray offered a humorous study of a man who gets compulsively involved in the problems of others. In *Otherwise Engaged*, the main character, Simon, is one who by nature and design tries to avoid any unnecessary contact with the ordinary details of his friends' and family's daily lives. Intelligence and a delicate aesthetic sense of life's priorities have built around him a defense that excludes all but the most discriminating forms of human contact. By birth and by inclination, he is the embodiment of the well-wrought sensibility that with polite courtesy rejects the ordinary emotions of life.

Life, of course, takes its revenge in Gray's play. At the opening curtain, Simon is settling in to an afternoon's listening to a new recording of *Parsifal*. He carefully sets the controls of his elaborate hi-fi equipment, stands in the center of the room for a moment to insure the sound is as it should be, and then settles into his sofa with the elegance of a Mandarin embarking on a long afternoon of meditation. The overture has hardly begun when Simon's tranquility is ruptured by unexpected invasions of life's cruder problems. First his upstairs tenant, a university student of disheveled aspect and demotic accent, bursts in to complain about his sex life and to borrow money. Then Simon's brother, a man sunk in domestic drudgery and despair over his chances of ever becoming an assistant headmaster at a boys' school, appears and commands Simon's reluctant attention for a half hour or so. Next, a squabbling couple arrives; then an old school chum whom Simon has forgotten—he never can remember names or faces, which is as close as he comes to a forthright statement of his feelings about their owners' significance—but whose girlfriend Simon has casually seduced in his office, barges in exuding menace and self-pity.

Although Simon listens to these intruders with a bemused, *noblesse-oblige* concern, he can't help revealing—by affecting misunderstanding or through fastening his attention on the wrong detail of their stories—how little he cares about their desires and dilemmas. Only his old Oxford friend, a literary critic who detests the "literature racket," earns admission into Simon's affections, and at the play's end, when even Simon's wife has denounced his aristocratic attitude after challenging it unsuccessfully with a confession of a love affair, the Oxonians sit in silent friendship and communication as Wagner's overture is finally allowed to proceed past its opening measures.

It is hard to know just what to make of Simon and his arrangement with life. The accusations hurled at him by those wounded by his manner are for the most part filled with envy of his self-sufficiency and grace. His brother is jealous of his intelligence and Oxford education; the student boarder, who borrows incessantly from him, resents the abundance of his possessions and the offhand way in which he lends them; his old school chum can't endure the knowledge that Simon, who had led a charmed existence as a schoolboy, still shows no signs that "life has caught up with him."

Considering most of the trivial petulance that Simon is faced with in *Otherwise Engaged,* he should hardly be accused of anything more than being justly discriminating in his defense of personal privacy. However, his wish to go no further than a nodding acquaintance with the daily incidents of existence is taken by most of the play's characters—and I suspect by the author as well—as an act of snobbish sensibility, and they surround him with carping moods of resentment until he is at last forced to abandon his efforts at cordiality and admit that he indeed does find their passions and problems of small consequence. When he does so, it is as if the dummies in the Manchester comedian's act of social insult had spoken back and informed the insistent working-class stranger on stage with them that they find his enthusiasm for football a curious reason for a spontaneous sidewalk conversation.

Otherwise Engaged is an often funny play that, in the absence of a real focusing intelligence, relies on this traditional conflict of manners and mannerisms to make it into something more than a series of light character studies. As directed by Harold Pinter and played with bemused sharpness by Tom Courtenay, Simon becomes a symbol of amiable insult to the world he inhabits, and one is left to wonder whether the charm and intelligence of the insult are worth the pain they cause and the isolation they demand.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Books in Review

Poet of Clarity

SELECTED POEMS, 1923-1975. By ROBERT PENN WARREN. *Random House. 324 pp. $15.00.*

Reviewed by JOHN ROMANO

THERE is something anomalous in the poetic achievement of Robert Penn Warren, and it is not the anomaly of his being simultaneously a serious poet and a best-selling novelist (*Band of Angels, All the King's Men*). Rather, the anomaly resides in the poetry itself, in its profound readability. There is little in the work of contemporary poets of Warren's stature that prepares us for the positive will to communication that Warren brings to his work—a work which is nonetheless subtle, inward, and complex. It is disorienting, therefore, to discover how sincerely this poet wishes to be understood, and wishes, even, to give pleasure.

> When my son is an old
> man, and I have not,
> For some fifty years,
> seen his face, and, if
> seeing it,
> Would not even be able
> to guess what name it
> wore, what
> Blessing should I ask for
> him?
> ("Sunset Walk in Thaw-Time in Vermont")

So direct and unguarded and clear are lines like these that the reader needs time to observe how the risks Warren has taken in them have been happily overcome: the risk of melodrama and sentiment, overcome by an exact focusing of feeling in the question with which the lines end; the risk of too familiar a theme, overcome because Warren has managed a striking permutation of an exhausted subject; the risk of prose and platitude, because something surprising and ambiguous attends the word "Blessing." "What Blessing should I ask for him?" Warren asks, with a disingenuous air of supposing that an answer is possible.

Nowadays it is almost considered deprecatory to speak of the accessibility of a poet. I am not suggesting that the meanings of Warren's poems are simple, but rather that, instead of constructing barriers or contriving masks, his poems throw open their difficult subject matter. For all the intimacy with which Warren speaks of himself in his poems—many of the poems written in the last fifteen years seem "confessional" in tone—he remains one of comparatively few recent poets of high quality more concerned with what we share with each other than with the elaboration of an idiosyncratic language or vision.

The style of this poetry, as the later poems especially reveal, is rooted in spoken language. The poems are therefore almost necessarily "democratic." Here are samples:

> Sometimes he wept for the
> human condition,
> But he was hell on women.
> ("Homage to Dreiser")

> Driver, do you truly, truly,
> Know what flesh is, and
> if it is, as some people
> say, really sacred?
> ("Internal Injuries")

> The child next door is de-
> fective because the mother,
> Seven brats already in
> that purlieu of dirt,
> Took a pill, or did some-
> thing to herself she
> thought would not hurt,
> But it did. . . .
> ("To a Little Girl, One Year Old, In a Ruined Fortress")

Context does not strain this language. Warren honors the ordinary usage of words in American speech, yet his manner is not simply colloquial, but simultaneously colloquial and tense. It is an arresting combination, defying the usual idea of the taut, spare modern poem—an idea formed to some extent by the influence of the school of New Criticism with which, ironically enough, Warren's name is connected. The different quality of the tension in Warren's poems reflects the confidence of his grip, a skill which can afford to relax the line, to let it out, with a certainty of its tightening fast at the crucial moment.

But even more than his style, it is his themes that truly display the generosity of Warren's vision. The words "history" and "destiny" occur often; and Warren's way with these dangerously large abstractions is deft. His almost constant purpose is to locate the near and personal particulars of our lives in some telling relation to the passing of time. Thus, in "Season Opens on Wild Boar in Chianti," a group of men are hunting boar late on a particular day on a particular piece of ground in Northern Italy. But a wider significance breathes through their exertion:

> In the twilight and silence,
> now passing
> Our door, men pant with the
> heaviness of their destiny's
> burden,
> Each wondering who will be able
> To choose his own ground when
> the adversary
> Encounters him, red eye to
> red eye.

The Italian setting is dramatic; in other poems the great abstractions —history, destiny—wink through the interstices of the ordinary, and the reader is encouraged to recognize the wink. "Answer to Prayer" tells of a woman who slips from the speaker's side into a church and prays, she tells him, for "Nothing much, just for you to be happy." Later they proceed to "the unlit room to enact what comfort body and heart needed." As we are about to be told the punch-line—that in fact she herself made him happy that day, and answered her own prayer—the poet interrupts:

> Who does not know the
> savvy insanity and wit
> Of history! and how its

JOHN ROMANO *teaches English at Columbia.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

most savage peripeteia
always
Has the shape of a joke—
if you find the heart to
laugh at it.

There is an exhilarating presumption here—that the reader, too, has felt the shape of history moving through the anecdotes of his own private life. Even though Warren ends by doubting that the woman "ever remembers she ever prayed such a prayer," or "if she remembers, she laughs into the emptiness of air," he has in this poem permanently ennobled the little stories we tell about ourselves, sanctifying them as shared human ground.

In some ways, the project of Warren's poetry is the project of classicism itself, which is the inspection of the concrete and particular for traces of the universal. The poems "Rattlesnake Country" and "Penological Studies" are among the most successful in this vein, along with the long poem "Audubon," where the material is historical rather than personal. Events, whatever their source, are dragged out of the "was" into the "is," to borrow Warren's terms; a skilled and patient exactitude of description is forced upon them—no poet presently at work surpasses Warren's capacity to render the visible—while at the same time a beautifully hesitant, self-conscious effort is made toward saying what they might mean. But the effort is never allowed to succeed, at least not entirely. "We must learn to live in the world," Warren says. To that end, events grow under his hand until they "glitter" and "glow" in an "ecstasy of being," and then the glow itself must avail as a kind of meaning.

Selected Poems, 1923-1975 is the work of a lifetime, and thus has a collective power that cannot be adequately captured by remarks on individual poems. The publication of this collection should bring full recognition of the warmth and directness which are Robert Penn Warren's special contributions to recent American writing, as well as an acknowledgment of the fact that he has since the 50's been producing some of the most beautiful poetry of our time.

LITERATURE

James Joyce
The Citizen and the Artist

C. H. Peake. This straightforward, penetrating study has two chief aims: to examine closely *Dubliners, A Portrait of the Artist,* and *Ulysses* as reflections of Joyce's attempts to reconcile the claims of family, country, and church with his own dreams and aspirations; and to show that certain techniques of style and organization are at play throughout his work. $16.95

Modern Japanese Writers and the Nature of Literature

Makoto Ueda. "Ueda examines eight prominent literary figures: Akutagawa, Dazai, Kawabata, Mishima, Kafū, Sōseki, Shiga, and Tanizaki. . . . An informative and stimulating discussion. . . . An important addition to English-language material on modern Japanese literature."—*Choice.* $12.50

The Positive Hero in Russian Literature

SECOND EDITION. *Rufus W. Mathewson, Jr.* "The ease with which Professor Mathewson can now integrate a new section [on Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn, and Sinyavsky] with his earlier text illustrates how well he had grasped the inner strains and stresses of Soviet Russian culture."—*Times Literary Supplement.* $14.95

Yeats: A Psychoanalytic Study

Brenda S. Webster. "Professor Webster discloses an important dimension of the psychology of Yeats's creativity that has been obscured by other attempts to view his work through his life. . . . [She] handles an exceptionally complex range of relations with subtlety, poise and insight."—*American Imago.* $8.95

The Political Identities of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot

William M. Chace. "Dispassionate, clear, fair-minded, and sensible. . . . Illuminates the important links between the two men, but firmly respects their overwhelming differences, renders judgment separately, and forces no common conclusions."—*Times Literary Supplement.* $8.95

The Cave and the Mountain: A Study of E. M. Forster

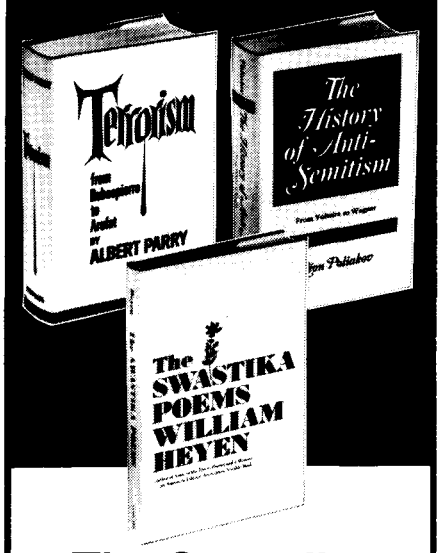
Wilfred Stone. "The most knowledgeable book on Forster available."—*The Spectator.* "Rich with biographical and background data, eschews the sentimental platitudes chronic in Forster criticism, and provides tough-minded appraisals. . . . The one book *about* Forster his readers need refer to."—*Books Abroad.* Cloth, $12.50 ; paper, $3.85

STANFORD

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTABLE

NEW BOOKS FROM THE VANGUARD PRESS



The Swastika Poems

By WILLIAM HEYEN

"It's the book of one who feels that he must confront the Nazi murder of the Jews, and discover how far he is attached to his heritage [German-American] and how far he must repudiate it....A fine and large achievement."—*Richard Wilbur.*
$6.95

Terrorism

From Robespierre to Arafat

By ALBERT PARRY

"Highly illuminating....Massively detailed in its exploration of terrorism, this book could not have appeared at a more opportune time."—JOHN BARKHAM.
$17.50

The History of Anti-Semitism

By LÉON POLIAKOV

Vol. I: *From the Time of Christ to the Court Jews* $10
Vol. II: *From Mohammed to the Marranos* $15
Vol. III: *From Voltaire to Wagner* (Just Published) $15

"The definitive work on the subject."—*The Observer*

"The exemplary work of a scholar and historian of responsibility."—*The Jewish Spectator*

THE VANGUARD PRESS, INC.
424 Madison Ave., New York 10017

On the Left

REVOLUTIONARY JEWS FROM MARX TO TROTSKY. By ROBERT WISTRICH. *Barnes & Noble. 254 pp. $16.00.*

Reviewed by HYAM MACCOBY

THAT JEWS were involved in great numbers in the development of the socialist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries is well known. But it is hard to know what exactly to make of this phenomenon. Does it represent a revolt against Judaism or is it, on the contrary, an expression of Judaism itself, returning to its purest Mosaic essence as a slave-revolt which validated itself by a law of justice? What kinds of Jews became revolutionaries? How did they envisage their own relationship to their Jewishness? (Here we may allow the reservation that part of their attitude may have been unconscious, and even at odds with their conscious attitude.) Is there, in fact, such a thing as a "Jewish revolutionary" or a "Jewish socialist" of a single, uniform type, or were they all so different that generalizations are unprofitable?

While there have been many *obiter dicta* and short essays on this topic (of which perhaps the most celebrated is Isaac Deutscher's "The Non-Jewish Jew"), there has never been a full-length treatment before Robert Wistrich's absorbing book. Wistrich asks the right questions and gives us the right kind of information. His method is partly a geographical one: he deals with the situation of the revolutionary Jew first in Germany, then in Austria-Hungary, in France, and in Russia. But to offset any possible impersonality in this approach, he also gives us (after a general introduction to each area) biographical treatments of leading figures: in Germany, Karl Marx, Ferdinand Lassalle, Eduard Bernstein, and Rosa Luxemburg; in Austria-Hungary, Victor Adler and Otto Bauer; in France, Bernard Lazare and Léon Blum; in Russia, Julius Martov and Leon Trotsky. These figures are well chosen to set off the different issues and contrasting approaches that are involved, and also to bring out essential similarities.

It might be objected that not all these figures were revolutionaries—Eduard Bernstein, Victor Adler, and Léon Blum were gradualists who believed in working through constitutional means. Yet, as Wistrich points out, they too believed in revolution, the "long revolution," which would eventually change the fundamental nature of society. One might object too that Wistrich has omitted detailed consideration of the leading figures of the Jewish Socialist Workers' Bund, and of socialist Zionism, who were also revolutionaries. The answer is that Wistrich is after all concerned with a certain type of Jewish revolutionary—specifically those who cut their links with the Jewish community under the influence of a vision of internationalism. And, indeed, from the standpoint of human tragedy, this is the most interesting type, and the one which provided the figures who played the great roles on the stage of world politics. Wistrich points out their mistakes and illusions; his sympathies are in fact clearly with the Bundists and socialist Zionists who refused to sacrifice their Jewish identity for the sake of an internationalist mirage. Yet the internationalists were more than just deluded individuals, and if I have any criticism of the book, it is that it does not quite bring out the grounds of their greatness, by which I mean specifically their greatness from the Jewish point of view, for, of course, the greatness of figures like Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, or Trotsky from the point of view of world politics does not need demonstration.

On the face of it, it is certainly not easy to see any Jewish significance in these revolutionary Jews. Quite contrary to the picture often given by anti-Jewish, or even pro-Jewish, writers, they did not in any way identify themselves with their Jewish background. Hitler might point, in confirmation of his notion of a "Bolshevist Jewish menace," to the galaxy of Jewish stars in the history of Communism, but the last thing in the minds of these Jewish

HYAM MACCOBY *teaches at the Leo Baeck College in London.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

leaders was to represent in any way the Jewish community, ethos, or history. In fact, they actively repudiated their Jewish affiliations. Wistrich presents this repudiation with a great wealth of detail, showing for example that the sources of Karl Marx's appalling *On the Jewish Question* lie in nothing more or less than traditional anti-Semitism. "His image of the Jew was in fact nothing but the classic stereotype of European Christian society, inherited from the Middle Ages and resurrected with new force in the 1840's by reactionaries, radicals, and socialists alike." Marx came from a long line of distinguished rabbis (including Joshua Heschel Lwow), but he had been brought up as a Christian and was utterly unaware of Jewish history or thought. He despised the Jews as a nation of hucksters, and said of them that their god was money. Long before Werner Sombart, he ascribed the growth of capitalism to the "Jewish spirit." So virulent was his attitude toward Jews (in contrast to the friendlier attitude of Engels, the non-Jew) that the question of "Jewish self-hatred" is inevitably raised. Wistrich has some interesting things to say about this topic, to which I shall return.

FROM Marx onward, the chief characteristic of the Jewish internationalist revolutionary was his repudiation of Judaism and Jewishness. He looked forward eagerly to the cessation of every form of Jewish identity, so that even Jewish socialism was bitterly opposed as "separatist." The Bund, after playing a pioneering role in the development of Russian trade-unionism and socialist organization, was forced out of the Russian Social Democratic party largely by two Jews, Julius Martov and Leon Trotsky. Martov, ironically enough, had been one of the Bund's founders. In those early days he had realized, together with Samuel Gozhansky and Arkadi Kremer, that a Jewish labor movement had to be organized on the basis of the Yiddish language and Jewish identity, not of assimilation. Later, however, under the influence of Lenin, Martov turned against Jewish "separatism" and campaigned ceaselessly against his own creation. Still more ironically, it was this anti-Bund policy which later brought about Martov's downfall and possibly even events of a far greater magnitude. For when Martov, as leader of the Mensheviks, came into conflict with Lenin and his Bolsheviks, he sorely missed those Bundist votes which he had driven out of Russian socialist politics. If only the Jew, Martov, had not betrayed the Jewish Bund, the Mensheviks (minority) would have been the Bolsheviks (majority)—and history would possibly have taken a different turn.

Instructive also is the case of Otto Bauer, the influential Austrian Jewish theorist to whom Wistrich devotes a highly interesting chapter. It was Bauer who restored nationalism to a place of respect in Communist thinking, but the only form of it for which he could find no place was Jewish nationalism. This is all the more remarkable in that Bauer did not define nationalism in territorial terms, but in terms of common history and "community of fate." By this definition, it would seem that the Jews should have been the supreme illustration of national identity. Instead, Bauer refused to allow that the Jews were a nation at all; they were merely an economic group of moneylenders thrown up by historical circumstances and having no cultural roots.

There were some Jewish revolutionaries who knew better. The most famous is Moses Hess, whose earliest writings were almost as scornful of Judaism as anything in Marx. After first introducing Marxist ideas to Germany, he went on to become the founder of Zionism there also. Wistrich does not devote a chapter to Hess, probably because his story is too familiar. Instead, he gives us a fascinating chapter about a somewhat similar figure, the too-little-known Bernard Lazare. The part played by Lazare in the movement to exonerate Dreyfus, which would never have got under way

Congress—Keystone of the Washington Establishment
Morris P. Fiorina

This concise and highly readable book makes a strong case that a Washington Establishment does indeed exist. Fiorina argues that, contrary to what is popularly believed, the bureaucrats are not the basic problem—Congressmen are. Cloth $8.50 Paper $2.95

The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination
Lawrence L. Langer

"A stimulating, perceptive study of the literature of the Holocaust. . . . Langer's examination of possible stylistic approaches to the subject, from the delicate whimsy of Aichinger to the graphic bestiality of Kosinski's *The Painted Bird* is in each case detailed and subtle."—*The New Republic* Cloth $12.50 Paper $4.95

The Tides of Power
Conversations on the American Constitution

Bob Eckhardt, Member of Congress from Texas, and Charles L. Black, Jr., Sterling Professor of Law, Yale University

"Absorbing as well as enlightening. Congressman Eckhardt, a Texas liberal, illuminates the day-to-day practical side of Congressional functions, while Professor Black presents the historical and theoretical perspectives."
—*Publishers Weekly*
Cloth $10.95 Paper $2.95

The Morality of Consent
Alexander M. Bickel

"An illuminating, often a moving book, with all of Professor Bickel's rare ability to bring law to life in vivid words."
—Anthony Lewis
Cloth $10.00 Paper $2.95

Yale University Press
New Haven and London

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"All I know about social contract theory is what I read in *Robinson Crusoe.*"

It's true, we do learn a lot of sociology, as well as history, psychology, and political science by reading novels.

Here the well-known social scientist, Morroe Berger, discusses two and a half centuries of fiction to explain how this happens. And why the novelist and the social scientist began working in the same fields.

Real and Imagined Worlds

The Novel and Social Science
Morroe Berger
$15.00

Harvard University Press
Cambridge, Mass. 02138

without him, deserves eternal honor. He sacrificed personal fame and success in order to help the oppressed Jewish masses of Eastern Europe, and died, worn out, at the age of thirty-eight. Yet Lazare too began as a typical Jewish revolutionary, seeing hope for the Jews only in assimilation, despising the Jewish cultural tradition, or what little he knew of it, and regarding both Westernized and Eastern Jews with unmitigated contempt.

The conclusion to which all this would seem to lead is that the Jewish revolutionaries suffered from "Jewish self-hatred," by which is meant the adoption of anti-Semitic attitudes by Jews. This is plain enough in Marx, Lassalle, and some others, and could even lead, as in the case of the Austrian leader Victor Adler, to complicity in anti-Semitic campaigning. Mostly, however, the anti-Jewish attitudes of the Jewish revolutionaries cannot be regarded as truly anti-Semitic, for they entirely lack the paranoid element of fear of a Jewish world conspiracy. The main feeling they communicated was scorn for what they regarded as the pettiness of the whole Jewish problem. Anti-Semitism itself was regarded as a trivial matter, which would disappear upon the advent of the classless society, and which, in the interim, might even have an occasional tactical usefulness. This attitude was a legacy of the Enlightenment, with its naive expectation of the disappearance of national and cultural differences.

On the subject of Jewish self-hatred, Wistrich's analysis is unfortunately rather hazy. He suggests that it may have been a factor in the formation of the character of the Jewish revolutionary, arguing that revolutionaries in general tended to come from a bourgeois background and were rebelling against their families, and that in the case of the Jewish revolutionaries, this rebellion was intensified by the internalization of society's hostility toward the minority group to which they belonged. True, there was a genuine idealism at work which sought to abolish all divisions among human beings; but there was also, Wistrich points out, a brutal indifference to the rights of minority cultures—an indifference which applied not only to the Jews but to other minority cultures such as the South-Slav peasant cultures of Southeastern Europe.

In my opinion, the psychological argument is an inadequate explanation of all this, as superficial in its way as Isaac Deutscher's in "The Non-Jewish Jew." In that essay Deutscher argued that what was specifically Jewish about the universalism of the Jewish revolutionaries, among whom he included figures like Spinoza and Freud, as well as Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, and Trotsky, arose from the fact that Jews existed on the margins of the great cultures: as the perpetual outsiders, they were enabled to take the universal view of things. Why, then, one is tempted to ask, have not the Gypsies produced the greatest revolutionary thinkers of all? Deutscher failed to derive the impetus of Jewish revolutionaries from anything *positive* in their background. He was too much of the Enlightenment savant himself to be able to see that, at bottom, the Jewish revolutionaries (including himself) were produced by Judaism.

Wistrich, too, refuses to acknowledge this, largely, I think, because he is over-cautious. He is concerned, rightly, to combat the usual easy equation of Communism and Judaism, made in their different ways by Hitler and Berdyaev, and he goes out of his way to point out the differences between Jewish religious messianism and Communist secular messianism. Yet it is not for nothing that messianism is a Jewish word. It is really an expression of Jewish universalism, or, to put it in another way, of the Jewish passion for unity. Messianism means that history is not a meaningless jumble of events, but rather a patterned unfolding. This position contrasts both with pagan multifariousness and with Christian dualism (in which unity exists only in another world). Jewish oneness is not a denial of multiplicity, but its resolution into unity, with each individual component transfigured and transcended in the unity attained; and this is why there is no contradiction between Jewish universalism and the stub-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

born Jewish insistence on separate identity.

In a passing comment, Wistrich points out that the Communist internationalist ideal was based on the "imperialism" of Christian internationalism. This observation would have been worth pursuing. The trouble with the Jewish revolutionaries was that they took from Christian tradition not only its stereotype of the Jew, but also its ideal of internationalism. Yet the fervor with which they pursued this ideal, the talmudic rationalism with which they developed it, and the tragic purity with which they followed it unto death, were all distillations of the Jewish tradition which, albeit unconsciously, they carried with them.

Wistrich's valuation of the Jewish tradition, then, is, like Deutscher's, too negative. He sees the Jews as the quintessential oppressed minority, whose survival was more threatened by the Enlightenment than by the plain hostility of old-fashioned enemies. But more important than the Jews' minority status in my opinion is their universalist message which was continued by Marx and his disciples (but also dangerously perverted because of their inability to discern the roots of their own passion). My disagreement with Wistrich, however, does not lessen my admiration for this important and fascinating writer. The book itself will be indispensable for any further study of its subject.

Going Private

THE FALL OF PUBLIC MAN. By RICHARD SENNETT. *Knopf. 373 pp. $15.00.*

Reviewed by STEPHEN MILLER

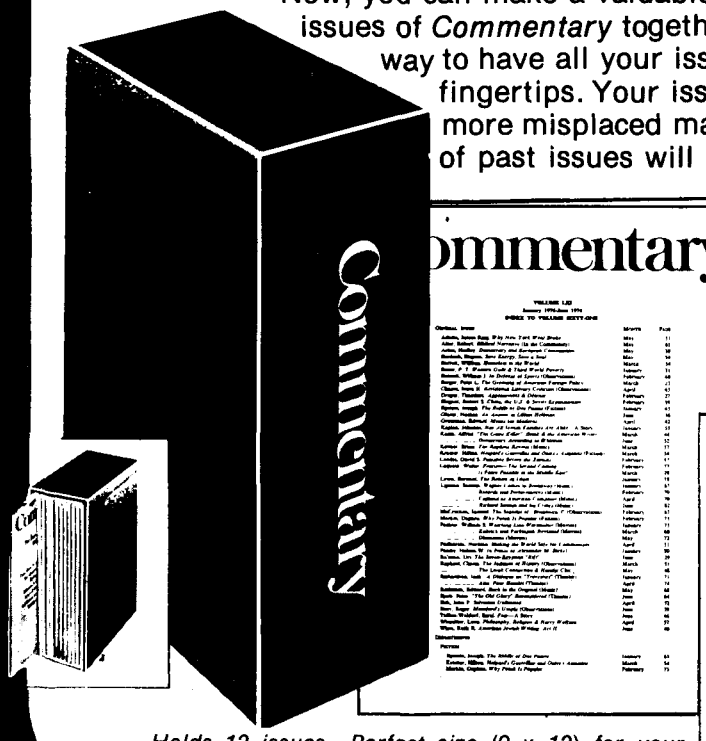
AMERICANS have always been chided both for their bad manners and their weak sense of social complexity. If Henry James thought the texture of American life thin, many foreign visitors spoke about the average American's lack of civility. In her nasty but perceptive book, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), Frances Trollope complained of the "violent intimacy" of a former American neighbor as well as the "coarse familiarity" of most Americans. In recent years such "coarse familiarity" has acquired a quasi-spiritual luster as somehow being more authentic, natural, and considerate. Though one can avoid a group-therapy session, it is becoming increasingly difficult to avoid waiters who greet one by announcing their first name. The latter is a trivial point, perhaps, but it does suggest a serious question: what is the relation, if any, of our daily social maneuverings to our more general values?

At first glance it would appear that *The Fall of Public Man* addresses the question of manners broadly conceived—what Lionel

STEPHEN MILLER *works for the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington.*

Special offer to readers of Commentary

Now, you can make a valuable addition to your library. Have all your issues of *Commentary* together in a single volume. An elegant practical way to have all your issues always available, together, at your fingertips. Your issues can be arranged in monthly order. No more misplaced magazines. Important articles and features of past issues will be found and referred to in seconds.



Holds 12 issues—Perfect size (9 x 12) for your bookcase. Commentary *stamped in gold leaf on the cover.*

INCLUDED FREE, if you order now, a complete Index to the previous year's *Commentary*. The Index features an orderly listing of every article and every book reviewed over the course of the year. This Index, together with the twelve issues of *Commentary* to which it relates, will truly make your *Commentary* slipcase an all-in-one reference service.

Commentary
165 East 56th Street, New York, New York 10022

Please send me _____ Commentary Slipcase(s). Price $5.50 each; 2 for $10. My check (or money order) is enclosed. I understand that I will also receive a free Index to the previous year's issues.

Name

Address

City State Zip

Allow four weeks for delivery

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HERALDING!
The collector's deluxe and limited (to 500) edition
of the mature (but still whimsical) Peter Max's titillating love song to each of these United States
PETER MAX PAINTS AMERICA
65 magnificent reproductions (on highest quality coated paper, exquisitely bound) of Max's newest oils, acrylics, collages, drawings, and overpaintings
all for $100

Yours **FREE** with your **PETER MAX PAINTS AMERICA** the controversial and much-praised **SECRETS, SPIES AND SCHOLARS Blueprint for the Essential C.I.A.** by Ray S. Cline (whom TASS suggested we bring out of "obscure retirement" and who THE WASHINGTON POST says "represents the tradition of intellectual honesty in intelligence"), regularly $10. cloth.

Or order both books separately at your booksellers or
ACROPOLIS BOOKS
2400 17TH ST., N.W., WASH., D.C. 20009
Check enclosed or charge to
Am. Express Master Charge BankAmericard

THE CRISIS OF THE ARAB INTELLECTUAL
Traditionalism or Historicism?
ABDALLAH LAROUI

Since few books in English consider the problems confronting many Arab intellectuals, this one—an intellectual tour de force that defines these problems in terms of history, tradition and modernity—should attract readers with an interest in the encounter between Afro-Asian and Western cultures.

191 pages, cloth $12.00, paper $3.25

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
BERKELEY 94720

Trilling in "Manners, Morals, and the Novel" called "a culture's hum and buzz of implication." The work of Richard Sennett, a sociologist who has previously written about the social dynamics of urban life, this book has an epigraph from Tocqueville that charges Americans with lacking a sense of society. Yet, though Sennett briefly touches on the notion of civility, his book is distinctly not a cultural history of American manners. Rather, it is a strange mélange of late 18th- and 19th-century intellectual and social history, including theater history, urban history, the history of the family and the history of dress, with several demographic charts thrown in for good measure. Reading like an interdisciplinary course gone haywire, the book suffers from an overabundance of historical detail and a minimal amount of precise argument. Rummaging through history to support his inflated thesis, Sennett unfailingly follows the cardinal rule of bad sociology: always choose a "profound" explanation even though an obvious one is readily available. In Sennett's case, the profound explanation is simply that the two-hundred odd years from the 1750's to the present have witnessed "the fall of public man."

One asks, as Bellow's Herzog asked of an equally portentous "fall" posited by Heidegger, "When did this occur?" Sennett's scheme provides an answer of sorts: in the middle of the 18th century, when the old hierarchical order was in the process of dissolving and a new bourgeois capitalist order was yet in its infancy, there occurred a brief moment in the cultural life of the West—specifically in London and Paris—that Sennett labels the age of sociability. During this period people understood and accepted a clear-cut distinction between public and private—recognizing, moreover, that if public life were to flourish one would have to take the strangers one met at face value, at what they appeared to be rather than at what they "really" were. Sennett quotes Lord Chesterfield to that effect, and notes that such public "roles" were especially enacted in London's coffeehouses, where anyone could speak to anyone else on public terms, not prying into his private life. Unfortunately, this public man bloomed only for a short time, and after slowly withering during the 19th century, he finally died, leaving us in the world of "today," where we are all threatened by "the tyranny of intimacy," and where public life has become a matter of "formal obligation," approached with suspicion and treated as a phony ritual.

I put "today" in quotation marks because it is Sennett's word, not mine. Sennett is exceedingly casual about his historical periodization, referring to his three eras as if they were buildings one could enter and always find the same congeries of thoughts, attitudes, values, etc. The historical scheme is not only heavy-handed, it is also lopsided; on the track of public man, we see him flourishing in London during the 1750's—a mere decade—then watch him falling into privacy in Paris during the 1840's and 1890's, and finally find him wandering around New York in the 1970's, overwhelmed by intimacy. It is hard to keep this public man in view, jet-setter that he is, and hard to accept an argument that culls evidence first from English history, then from French history, and finally from life in contemporary New York.

IF THE way in which Sennett gathers material to chronicle this "fall" is careless, the causes he provides for the downhill journey are flim-flam. There are three: industrial capitalism (or the capitalist system), secularism (or secularity), and a mysterious third force that Sennett never defines but calls "a strength which became a weakness. . . . " Of secularism the less said the better, for the definition Sennett provides is worthy of a Woody Allen: " 'The reason things are as they are in the world, reasons which will cease to matter in themselves, once we are dead.' (See Chapter 1.)" But in any case Sennett's major reason for the collapse of public man is clearly industrial capitalism. A monster of Miltonic dimensions—the sire of Mystification, Privatization, and Commodity Fetishism—capitalism is also endowed with Orwellian

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

powers, for it "controls not only the ideas of those who are its defenders, but shapes the imagination of those who are in revolt against its evils." Sennett insists that this creature's ravages know no boundaries, but if such is the case, why is there no mention of Japan, a capitalist country that appears to have maintained its public manners? We are also offered nothing on how public man has fared in non-capitalist countries.

Instead of such comparative analyses, we get a mixed bag of snippets from French and English history—which should probably be regarded with skepticism, since Sennett often distorts the meaning of his own evidence. Thus, in his discussion of the age of sociability, Sennett makes much of his distinction between coffeehouses and clubs, the latter portending the fall of public man since they eventually became private places where a select group of tired businessmen could collapse, read the newspapers, and above all be silent. To build his case, Sennett quotes Boswell about Samuel Johnson's concern with the "private" lives of all would-be applicants to the famous club he presided over. It seems that Joshua Reynolds once told Johnson that David Garrick, the celebrated actor, presumed that he would immediately be invited to join the club if he showed interest in doing so. Johnson pretended to be irritated by Garrick's presumption. "He'll be of us! How does he know we will permit him?" Johnson says to Reynolds. Sennett pounces on this interchange, which he got second-hand from a recent study of 18th-century coffeehouses, and says: "Garrick approached the club . . . as though it were a coffeehouse in the old manner. That openness Johnson denies." But this reading is surely wide of the mark, for Johnson was not particularly interested in the private lives of those who aspired to join the club; he cared only that they talk eloquently and intelligently. In any case, Johnson had been a friend of Garrick's for about thirty years, so that he knew Garrick's private "personality," to use a word that Sennett invests with ominous meaning. Johnson's remarks here are, in truth, merely a slightly strained joke, for Johnson always liked to criticize Garrick, since he was somewhat jealous of his friend's success on the stage. Sennett's Johnson, then, is not the "real" Johnson but an actor in a grandiose historical allegory—someone who points toward the fall.

If, in the above passage, Johnson anticipates the fall of public man, in another passage Sennett makes him serve as a member in good standing of the age of sociability. Sennett makes a distinction between two attacks on John Wilkes, the notorious libertine and Whig-radical, one by Johnson and one by "Junius," the *nom de plume* of an influential writer on politics whose real name we have yet to discover. According to Sennett, Junius's attack is full of personal abuse whereas Johnson's is substantive—a public attack, not a private one. Once again Sennett's "profound" explanation misses the obvious point: Junius could get away with vindictive personal abuse because he worked under the cloak of anonymity and was not open, therefore, to the charge of libel or the challenge of a duel. Johnson had to worry about these things; but even he did not worry about them unduly. According to Boswell, Johnson's attack "broke out sometimes into an extreme coarseness of contemptuous abuse. . . ." Throughout the 18th century, even during Sennett's golden age of sociability, the language of political argument was often marked by intemperate calumny.

Sennett, I suspect, is so sloppy in his use of evidence because he wants to make sure that his historical investigations come up with lessons for the present—more specifically, lessons for the New Left. Sennett believes the New Left failed because it became preoccupied with community rather than sociability, with relations along psychological rather than social lines. To prove this point he ransacks the past, so

Announcing two recent papers in the
IIS Policy Papers in International Affairs Series:

Images of Detente and the Soviet Political Order

Kenneth Jowitt

A critical examination of three of the most influential images of detente —those of Brezhnev, Kissinger, and Brzezinski, this paper defines the implications of each image for Soviet domestic politics and Soviet leadership of the communist bloc, especially Eastern Europe. The argument is made for a fundamentally different U.S. policy more compatible with decentralizing forces at work throughout the world.

ISBN 0-87725-501-6 *Paperbound; $2.00*

Detente After Brezhnev:
The Domestic Roots of Soviet Foreign Policy

Alexander Yanov

A highly sophisticated and original socio-political analysis of contemporary Soviet society by a Soviet dissident, this paper reveals an inherently unstable situation in which political power, economic reform, and foreign policy in the Soviet Union are intimately related. Critical of the current American approach to detente, the analysis provides the basis for political prescriptions that would allow the West a decisive role in shaping the character of the Soviet regime after Brezhnev.

ISBN 0-87725-502-4 *Paperbound; $3.00*

Order from: INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
215 Moses Hall
University of California, Berkeley 94720

Payment in advance is requested

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Isn't it time you knew?

A History of Zionism
WALTER LAQUEUR
Over 600 pages + maps
Paperback $6.95

At your bookstore or from SCHOCKEN
200 Madison Avenue, New York 10016

MATURE JUDAISM
Yehudi Adam

This book tells you the *TRUTH about JUDAISM.*

If you fear or hate truth you will not read it.

If you love truth you will read it twice because it is not easy reading.
73pp., $5.00

At bookstores or write *Dept. CY*

Exposition Press,
Hicksville, N.Y. 11801

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE
Please include a COMMENTARY address label to insure prompt service whenever you write us about your subscription.

MAIL TO: COMMENTARY
165 East 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022

CHANGE OF ADDRESS
If you're moving, please let us know five weeks before changing your address. Place magazine address label here, print your new address below. If you have a question about your subscription, place your magazine address label here and clip this form to your letter.

ATTACH LABEL HERE

name
address
city
state zip code

that he can say of Junius's attack on Wilkes that ultimately it paved the way for "the modern impulse to find political measures worthwhile only to the extent that their champions are 'credible,' 'believable,' 'decent' persons." Toward the close of this book, Sennett exhorts those on the New Left to find their way to civility, so that they can more effectively do battle against the realities of capitalist power, challenging "the forces of domination or inequity. . . ." But Sennett, finally, is not optimistic about this possibility, for the tyranny of intimacy caused by the capitalist system is a "more subtle" form of tyranny than the "brute coercion" of fascism (shades of Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*!) and therefore more difficult to resist.

Is Sennett's concoction merely a homily for the New Left? Well, yes and no. Sennett is saying that everyone's politics—not just the New Left's—is a politics of the private man, one that focuses on personalities, not issues. Though this may be true of New Left politics, it is certainly not true of the politics of most Americans; during the past twenty years Americans have consistently voted according to issues, not personalities. Though obviously a candidate's personality plays some part in the way voters respond to him, Lyndon Johnson, a man who was widely regarded as an unscrupulous wheeler-dealer, handily defeated Barry Goldwater in 1964; and in 1972 Richard Nixon, a man whom no one liked, scored a landslide victory over George McGovern. Both Goldwater and McGovern radiated honesty and decency, but most voters chose Johnson and Nixon; issues won these elections, not personalities.

For all this book's inadequacies, one cannot completely dismiss its concerns. There *was* a movement away from sociability during the past two hundred years, one that has been rehearsed by all the standard works of intellectual history. But aside from some remarks on fashion and on city planning, Sennett's book is simply a bad map of familiar territory. Thus, when Sennett talks about therapeutic narcissism, he is going over ground carefully cultivated by Philip Rieff in his seminal work, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*. And when he speaks of the need for social "masks" to preserve civility, Sennett is following Hannah Arendt, who made much of the dangers of "unmasking" hypocrisy in *On Revolution*. That Sennett makes no reference to these books is puzzling, but then there is much about *The Fall of Public Man* that is puzzling, not least that it seems less to have been written than produced—the product of two "idea-men," ten consultants, four researchers, five readers, and three editorial assistants, the whole enterprise supported by the Ford Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the Institute for Advanced Study. One wonders how this product of "academic capitalism" managed to get so far without anyone's telling Sennett that he had an Edsel on his hands.

Prisoner

MY MIND ON TRIAL. By EUGEN LOEBL. *Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 235 pp. $8.95.*

Reviewed by SETH CROPSEY

IN FEBRUARY 1948 the parliamentary government of Czechoslovakia was overthrown in a Communist coup. A year later the country's rulers, their political futures seemingly secure despite a straitened economy, attempted to improve their Soviet trade agreement and to normalize financial relations with the United States. The first of these gestures toward autonomy merely rankled the Soviets; the second elicited an iron-fisted response which Eugen Loebl, who was at the time Czechoslovakia's first deputy minister of foreign trade, describes in *My Mind on Trial*.

What alarmed the Soviets was the possibility that the Czechoslovak leadership was leaning toward some form of Titoist heresy. To prevent this, they staged a mass show trial, placing fourteen of the country's leaders—including the former secretary-general of the

SETH CROPSEY, *a new contributor, is an assistant editor of the* Public Interest.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Communist party, Rudolf Slansky —on trial for treason. All fourteen defendants pleaded guilty and "confessed" to their "crimes." Eleven were executed in December 1953 and three others—among them the author—were sentenced to life imprisonment. Loebl served eight years of his sentence, in addition to the three years he had spent in Czech prisons before his trial. Then in 1960 he was released and subsequently restored to favor by party secretary Alexander Dubcek. In 1968, when Dubcek's own attempt to liberalize and humanize Czech Communism was suppressed by the Soviets, Loebl fled and settled in the United States; he now teaches political science at Vassar.

My Mind on Trial covers all of this, but is mainly concerned with the period immediately following Loebl's arrest and prior to the trial, when he attempted to make some sense of what had happened to him. Shocked at finding himself in prison, he tried to imagine what mistake he might have made. A few months earlier, in obedience to party orders, he had traveled to the United States and succeeded in persuading the U.S. government to release industrial equipment that had been embargoed after the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia. This accomplishment and his record of devotion to the party at first served to reassure Loebl, unaware that it was precisely these Western overtures, in which he had played so large a part, that the Soviets were intent on discrediting.

For sixteen hours a day Loebl was interrogated by one Kohoutek, a ghoulish party functionary (later imprisoned himself), who intended to extract a "confession" from him. Kohoutek made no specific charges, since there were none to be made, but instead harangued his prisoner incessantly about such things as his Jewish-capitalist origins and the "Jewish tricks" he had perpetrated on his country. Kept in a tiny pen, Loebl was forced by his captors to keep walking during every waking moment, even while eating and while being interrogated. During the night, he was awakened at ten-minute intervals and made to call out his prison number.

After a year or so of this treatment, unutterably depressed by the gradual wrecking of his political beliefs, and harassed, bored, and humiliated beyond endurance, Loebl made an attempt at suicide, a task requiring great ingenuity since his captors had taken care to remove the customary means. He collected residue from around the toilet area, bit his fingers until they bled, and rubbed the filth into his fingers. But Loebl's captors, requiring a live specimen to stand trial, made sure the infection was treated. Their efforts were not in vain; after two years of imprisonment, Loebl gave his captors the "confession" they were seeking.

WHAT strikes the reader as strange in this account is Loebl's first response to his imprisonment. Any ordinary person, one might think, routed without warning from his bed, taken away to prison and held there incommunicado for weeks without being told the nature of his crime, would—before anything else—be overcome with rage at the sheer injustice of it all. But Loebl, at least in the first few days of his imprisonment, did not get angry at his captors. "I was completely convinced," he writes, "that if I were released I would shake hands with my interrogators—my comrades—and tell them that I recognized that they were serving the party." To understand this response one must recall that there is simply no place in the Marxist doctrine of history for the simple natural revulsion against unfairness which is the basis of justice. Having embraced Marxism, and having accepted Communist rulers as its historical agents, Loebl had no alternative but to ponder his own errors.

Loebl does, in *My Mind on Trial*, question the system which was responsible for his unjust imprisonment, but he does so on purely intellectual grounds, abandoning Marx's theory of value for a different set of economic principles based on a new approach to value in the post-industrial age. This too must strike the reader as a bit strange. Having gone through what he went through, Loebl would seem the last man on earth to be in need of an *intellectual* rejection of Marxism. He is, after all, a man who can

A "new world order" could well create a new world chaos

It is both naive and dangerous, argues Robert W. Tucker, to seek any sudden, massive transfer of wealth and power from the "have" to the "have not" nations. Even if this were possible, Dr. Tucker does not think it would create more justice in the world. He shows conclusively that enforced redistribution of wealth that runs counter to current realities of power is doomed to fail; the result will inevitably bring not justice, but large-scale violence.

THE INEQUALITY OF NATIONS

Robert W. Tucker

"Johns Hopkins political scientist Tucker, whose call for a Western military takeover of the Persian Gulf oilfields raised an uproar, may cause another flurry of controversy with this sophisticated analysis.... His unorthodox views could force both liberals and conservatives to rethink their policies."
—*Publishers Weekly*

$10.95 at bookstores, or direct from the publisher.

NEW. SIGNIFICANT.
BASIC
BASIC BOOKS INC.
10 EAST 53RD ST, NEW YORK 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

say from intimate experience, "The reason I don't like this monstrous system is that it routinely puts innocent men—like me—in jail." But he does not do so. Loebl never stares, Solzhenitsyn-like, into the heart of his former beliefs. On the contrary, he goes so far as to dismiss Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, which would seem rather relevant to his own case, as "romantic balderdash," on the grounds that "there was no such commissar in the real jail." Koestler's novel, however, was not written as a factual exposé of life inside a Communist prison, but rather precisely to expose that twisted sophistry whereby the innocent victim not only confesses to his crimes, but actually believes himself to be guilty.

Still, even while insisting that it was the intellect which led him to abandon Communism, Loebl remains anxious to record the brutality he suffered at its hands. In a curious way, *My Mind on Trial* offers yet one more testimony to the continuing power over the emotions that is held by a Communist regime of enslavement.

Orientalism & Anti-Orientalism

ISLAM AND THE ARAB WORLD: FAITH, PEOPLE, CULTURE. Edited by BERNARD LEWIS. *Knopf. 360 pp. $35.00.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM M. BRINNER

A WIDESPREAD popular interest in the Middle East and in the larger realm of Islam was a feature of Europe's romantic period as well as of its imperialist age. Fed by translations of the *Arabian Nights*, the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam, and especially by travelers' accounts of journeys through exotic lands, a strange, unreal, but generally attractive image was created—one that could not, and did not, survive the intrusion of contemporary social, economic, and political problems. After World War I, while scholarly works about Islam continued to grow in number, there was a steady decline in general interest that in turn discouraged the dissemination of books for a popular audience.

Recently, of course, this situation has begun to change once again, and for obvious reasons. Decolonization and the rise of Arab and Islamic power blocs in the United Nations; the Arab-Israeli wars; the Lebanese civil war; the worldwide acts of terrorism carried out by segments of the Palestinian movement; and, lastly, the energy crisis and the resultant wealth of the Arabs and some other Muslim peoples—all these have contributed to the resurgence of interest in Islam. In addition to such material considerations, there are cultural or spiritual factors like the West's current preoccupation with Eastern religions. While this usually means some highly Americanized version of Hinduism or Buddhism, Sufism and other Muslim religious movements have also been pressed into service. (On the other hand, Muslim arts—music, literature, architecture, fine art—have still not achieved the status in the West of, for instance, Indian music and art.)

ONE expression of the reawakening of interest in the Islamic world is the proliferation of popular books on the subject. *Islam and the Arab World: Faith, People, Culture* is a large, beautifully illustrated, and generally well-written volume in this vein, edited by the eminent Islamic scholar, Bernard Lewis, formerly of London University and now at Princeton. For all its size and the beauty of its illustrations, however, this is more than a coffee-table book; it contains much information and interesting reading, and anyone looking for a broad overview of the subject will consult it with profit. The book has also been the occasion of a small journalistic storm that has blown up around it and its editor, a storm that is symptomatic of a problem afflicting the entire body of Islamic studies.

One would gather from its title that the emphasis of this book is on two areas: the Islamic faith and the Arab people and culture. This, however, is not the case. Four of the thirteen chapters deal with non-Arab areas: Islam in Spain (by E. García Gómez), Iran (by Roger Savory of Toronto), Ottoman Turkey (by Norman Itzkowitz of Princeton), and India (by S.A.A. Rizvi of Canberra). The other chapters treat the Arabs along with the Persians and the Turks and the contributions of all of these to aspects of Islamic civilization: art and architecture (by Richard Ettinghausen of the New York Metropolitan Museum), Islamic cities (by Oleg Grabar of Harvard), Sufism (by Fritz Meier of Basel), Islamic literature (by Charles Pellat of Paris), music (by Amnon Shiloah of Jerusalem), science (by A. I. Sabra of Harvard), warfare (by Edmund Bosworth of Manchester), and Islam today (by Elie Kedourie of the London School of Economics).

Each chapter, roughly twenty pages in length, is followed by several pages of illustrations both in color and black and white, many of which have never before been published in such large format. These alone make the book a worthwhile possession. All the chapters are by outstanding scholars, but, as is usual in group efforts working within narrowly prescribed limits, the quality of the writing varies greatly. Some scholars, like Lewis, who contributes an introduction, can take a complex subject such as the basic beliefs and practices of Islam and write a clear, concise, reliable, and informative account for the educated non-specialist. Unfortunately, limitations of space and scope dull even Lewis's usual brilliance here. The chapters on mysticism, literature, and science also suffer in this way.

There are other problems, too. As Edmund Bosworth points out in his chapter on warfare, the major contact between Islam and Christendom for centuries was on the battlefield, many of the Islamic dynasties and empires had their origins in military conquests or revolutionary movements, and much of the medieval Islamic governmental apparatus, especially its land-tenure system, became geared to making

WILLIAM M. BRINNER *is director of the Center for Near Eastern Studies at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of, among other works,* Readings in Modern Arabic Literature *and* Chronicle of Damascus.

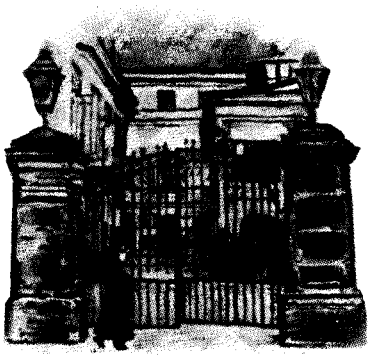
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

war. Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that the twenty-odd pages allocated to armies and warfare could not have been divided among some of the other authors and devoted to topics more central to an understanding of Islam as a religion and culture. Failing that, at least one chapter should have been devoted to Islam in areas of large concentrations of Muslim population like Central Asia, China, Indonesia, and black Africa. Most studies of Islam, this one included, still neglect these peripheral areas, yet it is precisely there that the adaptation of Islam to preexisting cultures can be seen in the process of development, and that the vitality of Islam is perhaps most obvious.

In placing the emphasis on classical, normative, and philologically-based views of Islamic culture and society, this book reflects the traditional approach and bias of much Western scholarship, an approach and a bias that have lately come under criticism in books and articles, at professional meetings, and in the press. This criticism is of two very different types. The first, voiced by some Islamic scholars themselves, is that Western scholarship tends to neglect the non-classical and non-textual sources and aspects of Islamic civilization. Actually, in so doing, Western scholars have simply reflected the tendency of traditional Muslim scholars, who for centuries ignored such phenomena as folk religion, popular law, and folk literature even in the heartland of Islam, not to speak of the peripheral lands. Thus the late Marshall Hodgson, in *The Venture of Islam*, could strike out simultaneously at the two views from which he felt Islam now needs to be rescued: the *ulama* view—the vision of Islam held by Muslim religious leaders and based on the ideals of the age of the Prophet and the revelation of the Koran—and the Western Arabist view, the latter being an outgrowth of the former.

This kind of criticism can be productive of stimulating discussions among scholars on different approaches to the study of Islam and the Muslim peoples and on laying guidelines for future research. There is, however, another, less healthy tendency unhappily symptomatic of our times. This begins with the denunciation of scholars and their motives (as well as of the whole Western scholarly tradition) and ends with the denial of the rights of inquiry into the history and culture of a people unless such inquiry preserves or bolsters that people's self-image or else furthers the cause of decolonization and world revolution. Particularly disturbing about some of the recent attacks on "Orientalists," "Arabists," and "Islamists" (all terms of opprobrium in the vocabulary of such critics), is the dual implication that the accused scholar or group of scholars hates Islam, Muslims, and "Third World" peoples in general, and, further, that "outsiders" have no real business in the field anyway, either because they are prejudiced by definition or simply

"A dramatic, moving portrayal of European Jewish life"* by "one of the great–if not the greatest–of living Yiddish novelists."**



In his richest, most impassioned novel yet, Chaim Grade has created a powerful, deeply affecting memorial to a lost time and place: Eastern Europe, in the years between the World Wars–and before the Holocaust–a time when Jewish Yeshiva life and culture truly flourished.

THE YESHIVA
by Chaim Grade

translated from the Yiddish by CURT LEVIANT
$12.50, now at your bookstore

BOBBS-MERRILL
Publishers since 1838

*DAISY MARYLES, *Publishers Weekly* **ELIE WIESEL, *N.Y. Times Book Review*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

because, to paraphrase the charge somewhat, only a fish has the right to study or teach oceanography.

Most recently Edward W. Said, professor of English at Columbia, has entered the anti-Orientalist fray, repeating some of these canards and adding a few of his own in a review-article (in the New York *Times Book Review*, October 31, 1976) of Lewis's book and nine other works on the Muslim world. Said's essay, titled "Arabs, Islam, and the Dogmas of the West," dismisses most of the books under review as expressions of those "dogmas" to which, Said claims, Western Orientalists adhere: that the West is superior and the Orient is inferior; that abstractions about the Orient based on texts are preferable to "direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities"; that the Orient is uniform, eternal, incapable of defining itself; and that the Orient is either to be feared or controlled. In Said's view, what should replace these "dogmas" is the same sort of "revolution" that overtook East Asian studies in the 60's: the work of the Orientalists is to give way to a Marxist-based, iconoclastic study of Muslim "reality." In other words, one set of "dogmas" is to be replaced by another.

Actually, Said's notion of Orientalist "dogmas" is for the most part an invention of his own mind. Bernard Lewis, in a thoughtful article on "The Study of Islam" which appears in his book, *Islam in History* (according to Said, this book displays "its author's animosity on nearly every page"), offers a brief historical survey of the rise of Orientalism in the 19th century and advances his own critique of the profession. Lewis observes, judiciously, that in studying the religion and culture of Islam the Orientalist's "motive [was] scientific curiosity—though the opportunities to indulge his curiosity were often the result of political and economic needs." When, indeed, has it been otherwise? But, on the other hand, what other civilization than our own has ever encouraged scholarship for its own sake?

Said finds all of Lewis's work filled with hatred toward Islam, a charge which it is impossible to accept after reading the sympathetic presentation of Islam in this volume. Said obviously would rather not have history report things as they were, but as he wishes they had been. While Said rejects the "dogmas of Orientalism" in favor of his own leftist dogmas, Bernard Lewis has been trying, in all of his writings, to defend the integrity of the profession of historian. When he steps out of his role as a historian to speak his mind and voice his opinions, he always indicates clearly that he is doing just that —interpreting rather than writing history. One may agree or disagree with his views, but ideologically-motivated attacks on him and other scholars can only destroy the intellectual framework of free inquiry in which alone Western scholarship can thrive.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Effects of Ice on Scotch

How fast a drink of Scotch whisky over rocks loses its flavor depends on the proof of the Scotch and the richness of its blend. These two factors are optimized for "on the rocks" Scotch drinkers in 90-Proof Famous Grouse, a venerable old brand from Scotland only recently introduced to America.

by Allen Mac Kenzie

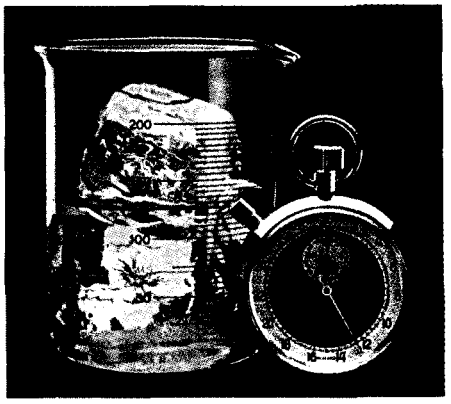
In countries where Scotch has been consumed for centuries, ice and whisky rarely mingle. But on this side of the Atlantic, the picture is quite different. While a small percentage of American Scotch drinkers take it neat, better than 35% drink it "on the rocks." The rest of us add varying amounts of water, club soda, etcetera. And ice. Always plenty of ice —the great American drink requisite.

It would seem then that the American Scotch devotee, particularly our on-the-rocks fancier, has a right to raise a serious question: *Is the Scotch I drink ideally suited to enjoyment over ice?*

Pursuing a Perfect Proof

Let's turn our attention first to the proof at which Scotch whisky is bottled. Consider, if you will, the possibility that there is a better proof for on-the-rocks Scotch drinking than that of your current brand.

Practically every Scotch sold in this country is bottled, at 80, 86, or 86.8 Proof. So at the instant you pour Scotch over ice, it contains between 40% and 43.4% alcohol by volume. (Proof is double the percentage of alcohol.) The chilling effect of the ice is accompanied by dilution. And when your drink has been properly cooled —in 30 seconds to a minute—you achieve what one Scotch connoisseur refers to as "the ideal sip." From then on, the Scotch drinker's enjoyment typically runs downhill, as the drink loses its freshness.



While there is no way to preserve that fresh Scotch flavor indefinitely, we submit that you can sustain the freshness substantially longer with 90-Proof *Famous Grouse*. If you have never heard of this brand, we are not surprised. It is a well established name in Scotland, but only recently introduced to America. So far as we know, *Famous Grouse* is the only Scotch now available in this country at 90 Proof.

How Fast Does the Proof Fall?

To illustrate the merits of a slightly higher proof, we chilled a jigger of Scotch (about 1.7 ounces) with 6 one-inch ice cubes. We measured the amount of water added to the Scotch after each minute and computed the change in proof.

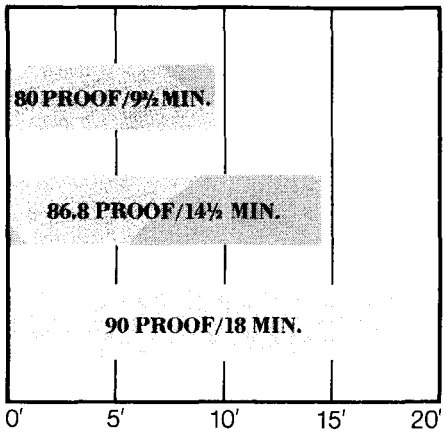
As you might expect, the proof falls rapidly during the first few minutes of cooling, but more slowly after the whisky is chilled. The diagram shows how long it takes Scotches of three different proofs to reach 45 proof when poured over ice. If proof is considered to be a measure of freshness, 90-Proof *Famous Grouse* has a 3½ minute advantage over 86.8-Proof Scotch after 18 minutes on the rocks. (Because it takes 3½ minutes longer to reach 45 proof.) Its advantage over 80-Proof Scotch is 8½ minutes.

Proof, of course, is not the only influence on the flavor of a blended Scotch. The proportion of malt to grain whiskies, origins of the malts, aging methods—these are also important factors determining the relative richness of Scotch flavor.

The makers of *Famous Grouse*—Matthew Gloag & Son of Perth, Scotland —have been producing Scotch in the same family for six generations. And they have performed their most noble feat in the rich blend they created for *Famous Grouse* Scotch. Its flavor—so remarkable at the outset—holds firmly to its character during prolonged contact with ice.

Knowledge of Scotch, however, cannot be indefinitely pursued in the abstract. Your learning process must ultimately include a leisurely sip of *Famous Grouse* on the rocks. For Scotch drinking is one of those pleasures enjoyed most, not in the pursuit, but in the conquest. Scotland's greatest bard, Robert Burns, said it best:

"Gie me a spark o' Nature's fire,
That's a' the learning I desire."



TIME IT TAKES THREE DIFFERENT SCOTCHES TO DILUTE TO 45 PROOF WHEN POURED OVER ICE(IN MINUTES.)

90 PROOF BLENDED SCOTCH WHISKY BOTTLED IN SCOTLAND
IMPORTED BY AUSTIN, NICHOLS & CO., LAWRENCEBURG, KY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Box or menthol:

Carlton is lowest.

See how Carlton stacks down in tar.
Look at the latest U.S. Government figures for:

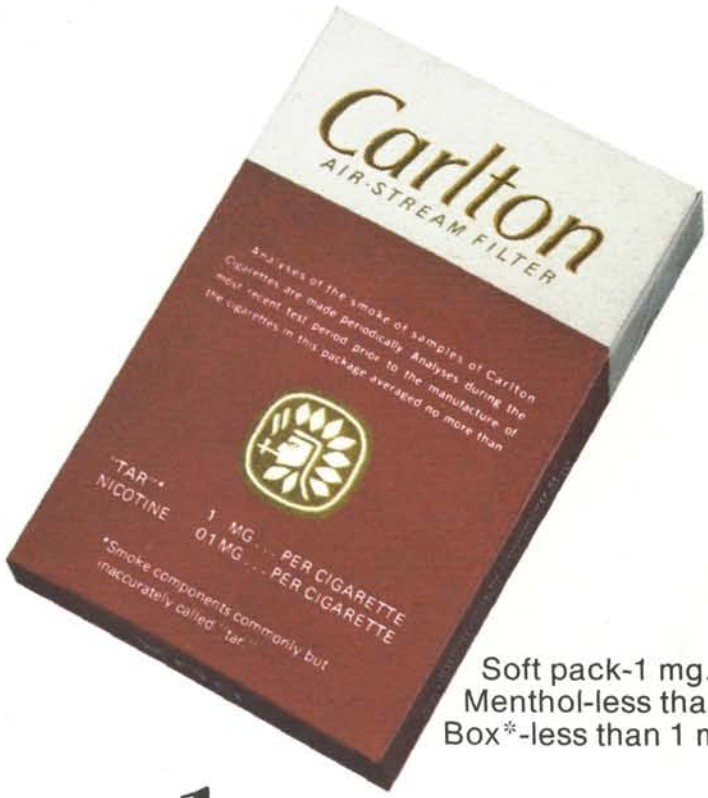
The 10 top selling cigarettes

	tar mg./ cigarette	nicotine mg./ cigarette
Brand P Non-Filter	25	1.6
Brand C Non-Filter	23	1.4
Brand W	19	1.2
Brand W 100	19	1.2
Brand M	18	1.1
Brand S Menthol	18	1.2
Brand S Menthol 100	18	1.2
Brand BH 100	18	1.0
Brand M Box	17	1.0
Brand K Menthol	17	1.4

Other cigarettes that call themselves low in "tar"

	tar mg./ cigarette	nicotine mg./ cigarette
Brand P Box	15	0.8
Brand K Mild	14	0.9
Brand W Lights	13	0.9
Brand M Lights	13	0.8
Brand D	13	0.9
Brand D Menthol	11	0.8
Brand V Menthol	11	0.7
Brand V	10	0.7
Brand M Menthol	8	0.5
Brand M	8	0.5
Carlton Soft Pack	**1**	**0.1**
Carlton Menthol	**less than 1**	**0.1**
Carlton Box	**less than *1**	***0.1**

*Av. per cigarette by FTC method


Carlton
AIR-STREAM FILTER
Analyses of the smoke of samples of Carlton Cigarettes are made periodically. Analyses during the most recent test period prior to the manufacture of the cigarettes in this package averaged no more than
"TAR"*
NICOTINE
1 MG. . . PER CIGARETTE
0.1 MG. . . PER CIGARETTE
*Smoke components commonly but inaccurately called "tar"

Soft pack-1 mg.
Menthol-less than 1 mg.
Box*-less than 1 mg.

Less than 1 mg. tar.

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

Of all brands, lowest...Carlton 70: less than 0.5 mg. tar, .05 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette, FTC Report DEC. '76.

Soft Pack and Menthol: 1 mg. "tar", 0.1 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette, FTC Report DEC. '76. Box: 1 mg. "tar", 0.1 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED